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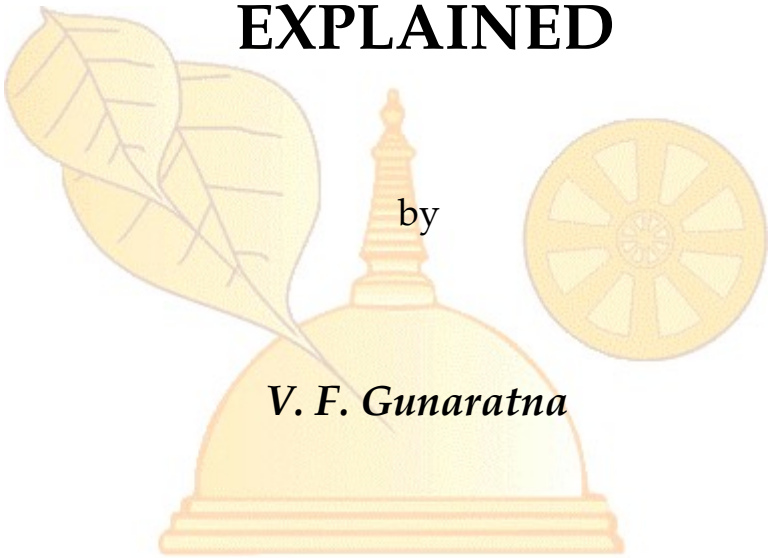

by

V. F. Gunaratna

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Foreword

by The Venerable Nārada Mahāthera

The Buddhist doctrine of rebirth, which should be differentiated from the Hindu view of reincarnation, is the favourite subject of Mr. V. F. Gunaratna, the learned writer of this small but profound treatise.

As an ideal and practising Buddhist he writes and talks on this important subject with firm conviction.

He has explained in these few pages very clearly almost all the intricate points connected with the subject.

In this book the writer solves all difficult problems from a Buddhist standpoint and satisfactorily answers many other relevant questions.

Nārada

Vajirārāma,
Bambalapitiya,
Colombo 5,
Sri Lanka.
29th April, 1970.

I. The Law of Change

Introduction

The purpose of this book is not so much to prove rebirth as to place before the reader certain facts, certain serious considerations and certain reasonable lines of thought, which will help him to appreciate the Buddhist point of view regarding the doctrine of rebirth, and also to understand how the phenomenon of rebirth works. "This huge world of life and motion, which is always becoming, always changing, has yet a law at the centre of it" says Radhakrishnan. This central law is Dhamma, and to the Buddhist it manifests itself in many ways as certain fundamental universal laws on the operation of which the phenomenon of rebirth works. It is therefore fitting to start with an examination of some of these laws. When these are referred to as laws it must not be taken to mean that they are promulgated by some governing body or that they are a man-made code. They are natural laws or principles in the sense that they indicate a constant way of action regarding men and matters as well as events and things of this world. The Buddha did not make them, but only discovered them and proclaimed them to the world.

Law of Change

The first fundamental law or principle that should be examined in order to appreciate rebirth is the Law of Change (*anicca*). It postulates that nothing in this world is permanent or static. In other words, everything is subject to change. Trees and creepers, flowers and fruits, goods and other belongings, buildings and lands, men and animals—in short everything imaginable is subject to this ceaseless universal law of change. In some cases this change takes place visibly and within a short space of time, while in other cases it takes place so gradually and slowly that the process of change is not visible at all. To this latter category belong not only rivers and mountains but even the sun, moon and stars where the process of change, as science avers, extends through millions of years. Indeed the various operations of the cosmos in their totality are one continuous change.

What is this change? It has various aspects and manifests itself in various ways. Growth and decay, rise and fall, increase and decrease, integration and disintegration, extension and contraction, unification and diversification, modification and amplification, progression and retrogression are some common aspects of change. Whatever the aspect of change, the changing from one condition or state to another is the essence of all changes, and this changing is an unfailing feature of all things. Change rules the world. There is no stability or permanency anywhere. Time moves everything. Time moves us also whether we like it or not. We live in a changing world while we ourselves are all the while changing. This is the relentless law. *"Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā"*— "all compounded things are impermanent."

An important feature about this law of change is that though everything is subject to change, nothing is ever lost or destroyed. Only its form is changed. Thus solids may change into liquids and liquids into gases but none of them is ever completely lost. Matter is an expression of energy, and as such it can never be lost or destroyed according to a principle of science also called a law—the law of conservation of energy. The student of physiology knows that the human body is constantly undergoing a change and that at the end of every seven years it becomes a new body with every part—skin and bone, hair and nails—completely renewed.

Even at death no part of the body is destroyed. Again only the form is changed. Fluids and gases, minerals and salts are some of the forms into which the various parts of the dead body change according to the nature of the part concerned. While physiology teaches that the human

body changes every seven years, the Buddha goes further and states that the human body is undergoing an invisible change every moment of its existence. This particular process of change is known as "khaṇika-maraṇa" (momentary death). Consider seriously the great marvel of a child changing into a young man and the equally great marvel of a young man changing into an old man. How different the young man is from the child and yet the young man can recall his childhood. So also the old man can recall his youth. The seeming identity of this individual is the continuity of an ever changing process.

Another important feature of the law of change is that there is no distinct and separate line of demarcation between one condition or state and the succeeding condition or state. These conditions or states are not in watertight compartments. Each merges into the next. Consider the waves of the ocean with their rise and fall. Each rising wave falls to give rise to another wave, which also rises and falls to give rise to yet another such wave. Can anyone point his finger to any one point or position in any one wave and say that there ends one wave and there begins another? Each wave merges into the next. There is no boundary line between one wave and the next. So is it with all changing conditions in this world. As Professor Rhys Davids in his *American Lectures* has said: "In every case, as soon as there is a beginning there begins also at the same moment to be an ending." Thus this changing is a continuous process, a flux or a flow—an idea which is in perfect accord with modern scientific thought. This leads us to two other fundamental laws which will be examined in the next chapter.

II. The Laws Of Becoming And Continuity

Two other fundamental laws or principles that should be examined in order to appreciate rebirth are the laws of Becoming and Continuity. We have just considered that the law of change indicates a changing process in all things. A changing process would mean that everything is in the process of becoming something else. This in short is the Law of Becoming (*bhava*). While the Law of Change states that nothing is permanent but is always changing, the law of becoming states that everything is every moment in the process of becoming another thing. The law of becoming is thus a corollary to the law of change.

A seed is every moment in the process of becoming a plant and a plant is every moment in the process of becoming a tree. A bud is every moment in the process of becoming a flower while an infant is every moment in the process of becoming a youth and then an old man. At no point is anything not in the process of becoming something else. A ceaseless becoming is the feature of all things. It is the ever present feature underlying all changes. In a sense becoming is the only process in the world since everything is in the process of becoming another thing. Nothing is static. Everything is dynamic. The law of becoming can therefore be stated in another way: Nothing is, everything is becoming. One may ask: "Suppose a seed is not planted or a plant is uprooted can you still maintain that the seed is in the process of becoming a plant and a plant is in the process of becoming a tree?" By no means, but the process of changing does not end. It continues, but in another direction—in the direction of decay and disintegration. Both seed and plant gradually change and decay and are absorbed into the elements, and as such they too are not destroyed or lost. They too continue to exist: This leads us to a consideration of the idea of continuity which is another law.

Law of Continuity

Dependent on the law of becoming is the law of continuity. Becoming leads to continuity and therefore the law of continuity is a corollary to the law of becoming. We have already considered that the law of change can only change matter but not destroy it, and had remarked that solids may change into liquids, and liquids into gases, but that none of them is ever completely destroyed. The particular energies of which they are an expression continue while their forms alone are changed. Viewed in this light, continuity is also an unfailing feature of all things. It is because there is continuity that one does not see an exact line of demarcation between one condition or state and the next.

There is also no time gap between the two.

Even time is continuous. The grammarian may speak of the past tense, present tense and the future tense, as if they exist in watertight compartments, but in reality there are no sharp dividing lines between present, past, and future. The moment you think of the present it has glided into the past. Your friend asks you what the time is. You look at your wrist watch. It points to 9 a.m. and you tell your friend "It is 9 a.m." But quite strictly and accurately is it so? It is not 9 a.m. when you answer him. It will be even a fraction of a second past 9 a.m. Time never stays. The present is always gliding into the past. The future is always advancing to the present. Time also is governed by the law of continuity.

If within our knowledge most things have had a present, a past, and a future, showing a continuous process, can man alone stand amid these moving processes without a past and without a future? Why should the fundamental, universal, all—powerful laws of change, becoming, and continuity suddenly stop operating and come to a dead halt in respect of man

only, when he dies? Cannot man also be a part of a continuous process and death be the temporary end of a temporary phenomenon? Cannot death be just another instance of change and open the door to another condition or state for the dying man? These are matters that have to be seriously considered, before rejecting the doctrine of rebirth hastily and without much thought.

III. The Law of Action and Reaction

The Law of Action and Reaction is another fundamental law or principle that should be examined in order to appreciate rebirth. This law postulates that for every action there must be a result or reaction. This principle of a result flowing from an action applies to every field of action whether that action is caused by nature or by man. It is a universal law and applies to the physical world as well as the mental world. This law is also called the law of cause and effect. When this law has reference to the actions of human beings it is called the law of kamma and it is in this sense that we have to consider it here. The word "kamma" literally means "actions" but is very often used to denote the result of an action for which the more correct word would be *"kamma vipāka."*

It is the law of kamma that governs the results of actions performed by man; and the principle underlying the nature of the results that follow is indicated by the following words: *"Yādisaṃ vapate bījaṃ tādisaṃ harate phalaṃ"*- "as he sows, so does he reap." Thus the law of kamma sees to it that good deeds beget good results and that bad deeds beget bad results. Its operations are characterized by perfect justice, since kamma is a strict accountant. Therefore each man gets his exact deserts, not more, not less.

If kamma operates with such unerring precision, the question can rightly be asked why some doers of good deeds die without reaping the good results they are entitled to, and why some doers of bad deeds die without suffering for their bad deeds. Such situations can make one lose faith in the justice of the law of kamma. There are many other anomalies in life that similarly need an explanation. The unequal distribution of joy and sorrow, of wealth and poverty, of health and disease among men in this world are some of them. It is only when we imagine that the time of operation of this law is confined within the narrow limits of this one life that these situations appear to be anomalies. If on the other hand we postulate a past life and a future life, then there are complete explanations for all these situations. The actions of a past life can produce results in this life and the actions of this life can similarly produce results in the next. This accounts for the inequalities among men in the present life. In the Majjhima Nikāya (Sutta No.135) the Buddha has said: "Actions (*kamma*) are one's very own; actions are one's inheritance; actions are one's source of origin; actions are one's kith and kin; actions are one's support; actions divide beings, that is to say, into lowness and excellence."

As regards variations in the time of materialization of results, it is common knowledge that in all fields of action there are immediate results and delayed results. Results do not always arise in the order in which their causative actions have taken place. Many extraneous factors can arise to disturb that order. Similarly in the field of human actions, results do not always follow a principle of "first come, first served," for very good reasons. The law of kamma operates in so many ways and the varieties of kamma are so many, that the process of kammic operations becomes intricate; and only a very brief reference to it is possible here.

Although it is popularly supposed that by the law of kamma an action is followed by its result, it should be known that other causative factors also come into play and often it is their combined effect that determines the result. A single cause cannot produce a result, much less many results, nor can many causes produce just one result. This theory of multiple causes and multiple results has been referred to in the Visuddhi-Magga (Chapter XVII): "Not from a single cause will arise one fruit or many nor from many causes will arise a single fruit" (Ven. Ñāṇamoli Thera's translation). Thus several causes must combine to produce a result. Some of these combining causes can strengthen and expedite the result (upatthambhaka kamma) while some can obstruct and delay it (upapīḷaka kamma) and yet others can completely nullify it

(ahosi kamma). When there is an interaction and interplay of opposing kamma sometimes the resulting balance of kamma determines the nature of the result, sometimes the precedence. The order of precedence is

1. *Garuka kamma* (weighty kamma)
2. *Āsanna kamma* (death-proximate kamma or terminal kamma)
3. *Ācinna kamma* (habitual kamma)
4. *Kaṭattā kamma* (miscellaneous reserve kamma)

   (This last refers to kamma which does not fall within any of the foregoing categories).

It is by having resource to the presumption of rebirth that all the seeming anomalies and inequalities of life can be explained. Attempts have been made by those who do not subscribe to the belief in rebirth to explain these anomalies in other ways. These attempts either do not bear logical analysis or are based on a much more difficult presumption than rebirth. The presumption of rebirth is the most reasonable and justifiable resumption that the finite human mind can make, to explain the seeming anomalies and inequalities of life.

IV. The Law of Attraction

One other fundamental law of principle that should be examined in order to appreciate rebirth is the Law of Attraction. The operation of this law is based on the principle of "like attracts like." There is a tendency for forces of the same type to be attracted to one another. Hence this law is also called the Law of Affinity. It is known that an atom of particular strength and quality of vibration will attract to itself another atom whose vibrations harmonize with its own. Two wireless telegraphic instruments will receive and transmit messages from one another only if they are similarly attuned.

This law operates not only in the world of inanimate forces but even in the world of animate life. The saying "birds of a feather flock together" indicates this tendency. Not only birds but even other types of animals are seen to congregate with those of their own special type. When we come to human beings it is common knowledge that men of similar leanings and tendencies are attracted to one another. The many clubs and associations whose members are interested in the same type of study or hobby or games is evidence of this tendency. The Buddha has referred to this tendency thus: "Beings of low states flow together, meet together with those of low states. Beings of virtuous states flow together, meet together with those of virtuous states. So have they done in the past. So will they do in the future. So do they now in the present" (Saṃyutta Nikāya—Nidāna Vagga). Mental telepathy is yet another instance of the operation of the Law of Attraction.

In regard to the world of human beings, there is a very special aspect of this law of attraction which does not operate in any other field. Man not only attracts to himself others of similar leanings and tendencies, but is often able to attract to himself the very things he strongly likes or the very conditions and situations he strongly desires. This special power to attract material things and conditions is peculiar to man only. Does it not sometimes happen that just when we are longing and urgently needing to find the address of a friend which we have lost years ago, we unexpectedly come across it in a place where we least expect to find it? Does it not sometimes happen that a student urgently needing a book which is out of print and not easily procurable suddenly comes across it in a wayside bookstall? One may say this is chance. Maybe, but can it not also happen otherwise? Is chance the only explanation? Is chance an explanation after all? There is a cause for everything and when the cause is unknown or unknowable this convenient word is trotted out.

The examples just mentioned may also be due to the fact that there is some strong attractive force or power in our desire-vibrations which makes it possible for those desires to materialize and find their objectives. Strong and persistent desires are able to radiate vibrations far and wide and reach the very thing or the very conditions desired. Distance is no bar as this is not a case of physical travelling. It is not physical things only that travel. All this is possible because of the tremendous power of the mind. The very first stanza of the Dhammapada declares: *"Mano pubbaṅgama dhammā mano settha mano mayā"*—"mind is the forerunner of all conditions, mind is supreme, mind-made is everything."

Further in the Sagātha Vagga (Devatā Saṃyutta) of the Saṃyutta Nikāya the Buddha has said: " 'Tis by the mind the world is led. 'Tis by the mind the world is drawn. The mind it is, above all other things that brings everything within its sway." The reason why more often than not desires fail to materialize is either because more often than not they do not reach that very high degree of intensity and persistence necessary for their materialization, or because more powerful counter-vibrations emanating from other sources are at work. Powerful and persistent concentration on the same desire generates an overwhelmingly attractive force and, apart from

its cumulative effect, it has also the further effect of influencing the subconscious mind where this power of attraction can develop in strength and exert its influence over the conscious mind. One can desire consciously as well as subconsciously. The subconscious motivations springing from desire are more powerful than the conscious motivations.

W. W. Atkinson, that inspiring writer, uses the expression "thought-magnet" precisely because thoughts possess this great power of attractions. He says:

> "Each idea, desire and feeling exerts its attractive power in the direction of drawing to itself other things to serve itself. All this refers to the inner workings of thought-attraction … This attractive power operates gradually and more or less slowly at first, but like the snowball or the growing crystal, its rate of growth increases with its size."
>
> (*Thoughts are Things*)

The reader may wonder what all this has to do with rebirth. The relevance will presently be seen. Buddhism teaches that the most powerful motivating force in the world of beings is desire or craving. It is called taṇhā. Many and varied desires spring from this basic taṇhā. However there are three special aspects of this taṇhā or craving, one of which is bhava taṇhā or craving for existence. It is not generally realized how comprehensive and widespread this type of craving is in regard to the life and actions of man. It underlies almost all the manifold activities of man, who is nearly every moment of his life moved by it consciously and, more often than not, subconsciously. The desire to be, the desire to live on, is the fountain source of all other desires. It is the unseen undercurrent driving man to action, whatever the nature of that action may be.

How can it be otherwise? Just consider. We earn, we eat, we dress, not because we desire to die, but, fundamentally, because we desire to live. We love, we hate, not because we desire to die, but, fundamentally, because we desire to live. We struggle, we plot, we plan, for precisely the same reason. We utter falsehoods, we commit crimes, not, because we desire to die but, fundamentally, because we desire to live. Even the act of suicide, paradoxical as it may seem, springs fundamentally from a desire to live—to live a life free from difficulties and troubles, free from obstacles and disappointments.

It should now be obvious that this craving for existence looms large in the mind of man consciously as well as unconsciously. Craving, like any other thought, is an expression of energy and as such it cannot be lost or destroyed. This powerful and persistent craving is a powerful and persistent expression of energy, and cannot die with the dying man. On the contrary, at the moment of death, by reason of the operation of the law of attraction (life being more or less a series of conscious and unconscious cravings for existence), the accumulated energies resulting from this powerful and persistent desire or craving for existence will be the means of attracting to this dying man the very conditions necessary for another existence. Thus the craving for existence makes him re-exist. The will to live makes him re-live. He then mentally grasps another existence. This grasping has been dealt with very forcefully by a Western writer, M. O. C. Walshe, in his *Buddhism for Today:*

> "At the moment of death the higher mental functions cease, and the unconscious patterns caused by past kamma come to the surface. Chief of them is the force of craving—taṇhā. Dependent on the enormous force of this taṇhā, there is an instinctive grasping at a new physical base, a new conception takes place and a fresh life is started … Is this in principle so difficult to understand? A dying person normally fights for his life as long as his existing body is able to stand the strain. How could this terribly strong urge be simply dissipated at death? We know that in the faculty of telepathy the mind seems to leap from one body to

another in some sense. If we accept that that is possible, as we must, then we can perhaps form an idea of how the 'mental leap' at death takes place."

In this connection it should be mentioned that the Buddha on one occasion while answering a question put to him by a wandering ascetic called Vaccha as to what exactly causes one life to link with the next at the moment of death, referred to that powerful force called upādāna which means "grasping" and explained that at the moment of death taṇhā or craving becomes this grasping force. The Buddha has stated this very emphatically:

> "At the time, Vaccha when a being lays aside this body, and rises up again in another body, for that I declare taṇhā (craving) to be the grasping force upādāna. Indeed, Vaccha, on that occasion *taṇhā* (craving) becomes the grasping force (*upādāna*)" (Saṃyutta Nikāya IV. 398).

Here then is a pointed reference to what happens at the moment of death. Thus the craving for existence (*taṇhā*) which is most powerful at the moment of death (even though the dying man may be consciously inactive) becomes a powerful grasping force (*upādāna*), and it is this grasping force that grasps the opportunity for re-existence which his craving has attracted. Upādāna is an intensified form of taṇhā. Its grasping and clinging power is overwhelming.

Consider the case of a man who has fallen from the deck of a ship on the high seas at midnight unknown to others. He struggles with the devouring waves. Frantically he would clutch at anything, even a passing straw. However by reason of his powerful and persistent cries, he attracts to himself a rope that has been flung towards him by the men in the ship. How tenaciously will not this drowning man, struggling for his breath and his life, grasp that rope, and eventually reach the ship for a further lease of life? Greater, far greater, is the tenacity of that mental grasp (upādāna) of any dying man struggling for his last breath when the powerful and persistent energies resulting from the totality of his powerful and persistent cravings for existence have attracted to him the opportunity for further existence which he most tenaciously grasps. This opportunity and this grasping are purely mental phenomena. They will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

Indeed, life is a series of cravings. The accumulated cravings for existence, added to the powerful craving at the moment of death, attract to the dying man a further existence. Indeed, the will to live makes man re-live.

Hence it is that a part of the all-comprehensive formula of the chain of Dependent Origination or causal connections (*paṭicca samuppāda*) runs as follows:

Taṇhā paccayā upādānaṃ (Dependent on Craving, arises Grasping)

Upādāna-paccayā bhavo (Dependent. on Grasping, arises Becoming)

Bhava paccayā jāti (Dependent on Becoming arises Rebirth).

V. Mind and the Law of Change

In the very first chapter we considered how the body is subject to the law of change. It is necessary now to consider how mind also, like the body, is subject to the same law. Mind is not something physical. It is not something located in the brain as was erroneously supposed by certain schools of thought in the past. The mind is not in the brain nor is the brain in the mind. According to Buddhist psychology mind is nothing but a constant stream or flow of thoughts. Thought is just mind in operation or mind in motion, just as wind is air in motion. Thought is an expression of energy and therefore the mind, like thought, cannot be lost or destroyed, but is subject to change. The mind changes from moment to moment. One moment it is one thought that engages the mind and the next moment it is another. This process of thought following thought is continually taking place. The mind is thus nothing but an endless succession of thoughts. It is not a unity, but a continuity. It is not permanent or static. It is a series (*santati*). It is a flux or flow (*sota*). It is a stream of successive thoughts which are continually arising and passing away from moment to moment. Each thought is succeeded by another with such rapidity as to give the mind a semblance of something stable and permanent. A stick burning at one end and turned rapidly round and round in the dark creates the illusion of a ring or circle of fire to onlookers at a distance who do not know what is actually happening. In reality however there is no such permanent ring or circle. It is just the picture of successive burning sticks following each other closely in a rapid circular movement.

So it is with the mind where thoughts succeed each other with a much greater rapidity. Mind has therefore been compared to the flow of water in a river (*nadi soto viya*), where sheets or currents of water follow each other with such closeness or rapidity that we seem to see a permanent thing called a river, and are tempted to regard it as such, whereas it is clearly not so. The Kelani River of yesterday is not the Kelani River of today. The river you have to cross in the morning to get to your place of work is not the river you re-cross in the evening after your work is over. It is a different set of waters each day, each hour, each moment. So also with the mind. It is a different thought each moment, one thought following the other with such rapidity of succession that the illusion of a permanent thing called mind is created.

This rapidity of succession of thoughts has been the subject of pointed comment by the Buddha in the Aṅguttara Nikāya (i.v.): "Monks, I have not heard of any other single thing so quick to change as the mind, in so much that it is no easy thing to illustrate how quick to change it is." In the commentary Atthasālinī it is said: "While a unit of matter which has arisen persists, seventeen thought-moments arise and break up, and no illustration can convey the shortness of the time they occupy" (P.T.S. translation pt. 1, p. 81). In this connection it is important to remember that not only is there a rapidity of succession of thoughts but that there is no boundary line between one thought and another. One thought merges into the other so that the expression "succession of thoughts" does not quite accurately describe the position. Hence the description by reference to a river, where there is not so much a succession of waters as a flow of waters. That eminent psychologist Professor William James in his *Psychology: Briefer Course* has a whole chapter entitled "The Stream of Consciousness." Here he says: "Consciousness then does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed, it flows. A 'river' or 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter let us call it *the stream of thoughts*, of consciousness or of subjective life." (The italics are his).

The rapidity of this process, whereby continually one thought merges into another, not only invests the mind with a seeming identity and a semblance of stability, but it also leads one to

imagine that there is a mysterious permanent something residing within the mind which performs the mental function of thinking. It requires a little hard thinking to appreciate the view expressed by Professor William James in his *Principles of Psychology* that "the thoughts themselves are the thinkers." In the same chapter referred to above he says: "If we could say in English 'it thinks' as we say 'it rains' or 'it blows,' we should be stating the fact most simply."

This view of the mind as being not a unity but a series of thoughts is held by almost all psychologists of note. For instance, Bertrand Russell in *Religion and Science* says: "Until recently, scientists believed in an indivisible and indestructible atom. For sufficient reasons physicists have reduced this atom to a series of events; for equally good reasons psychologists find that mind has not the identity of a single continuing thing but is a series of occurrences bound together by certain intimate relations." He also adds, "The question of immortality therefore has become the question whether these intimate relations exist between occurrences connected with a living body and other occurrences which take place after the body is dead."

As each thought passes away from the conscious mind it transmits to the subconscious or unconscious all its characteristic energies, impressions and tendencies, though one is not aware of this transmission. It is not every mental process that comes within the awareness of the conscious mind. There are many mental processes of which we are not aware. This leads us to a consideration of the subconscious and unconscious aspects of the mind together regarded in Buddhist psychology as "bhavaṅga citta." As this will be specially dealt with in the next chapter no further reference to it will be made here other than to remark that if the impressions of our thoughts are not retained somewhere, it is impossible to explain the very existence of that marvellous faculty of memory whereby one is able to retain and recall at will many events of the past, as well as passages of poetry and even prose that one has learnt by heart.

In Chapter I we learnt that the body is a changing process. In this chapter we have just learnt that the mind is also a changing process. Man is a psychophysical combination, a combination of mind and body. Now we know that it is a combination of a changing mind and a changing body. Mind and body thus viewed as changing processes help us to appreciate the view, rather difficult to comprehend, that we actually live for one moment only, and that the next moment it is another life. Thus the duration of life, in the ultimate sense, is for one moment only. This is sometimes referred to as "the instantaneousness of life." As vividly pointed out in the *Visuddhi Magga* (chapter VIII), a revolving wheel touches the ground at one point only at any given moment. At the very next moment, the very next point in the wheel touches the very next point in the ground. Similarly we live for one thought-moment only, and the very next moment is really another life, because what then functions is another mind with another body, just like another point in the wheel touching another point in the ground. That it is another body that functions at the next moment was explained in the course of Chapter I on the law of change, where it was stated that the body changes every moment and that there is a living and a dying every moment (*khaṇika maraṇa*).

Continuity of life, however, is maintained in spite of this momentary living and dying because there is not only momentary living and dying, there is also momentary re-living, and the re-living is related to the living of the preceding moment by reason of the transmission of impressions and tendencies earlier referred to. This process of one thought or consciousness giving rise to another continues without a break. Even at the end of the present span of life, as will be discussed in another chapter, the dying consciousness will give rise to another consciousness (obviously not in the same body nor in the same place or plane of existence), which succeeding consciousness along with two fresh physical factors (the parental sperm and ovum cells), will combine in some appropriate maternal womb to which it is drawn to form the nucleus of a fresh being. That the succeeding consciousness can arise immeasurable distances

away can be regarded as not impossible because in the first place it is not a case of travelling in the physical sense and secondly because the law of attraction works in the psychic plane as well, where time and distance do not count.

Thus it comes to pass that the change of life from one moment to another in this existence is in essence no different from the change of life from one existence to another, the difference between death and life being only a thought-moment. The first thought-moment in the subsequent life does not originate on its own. It is a sequel to the last thought-moment of the preceding life. It is therefore a continuity in the series of successive thought-moments that constituted the preceding life, although in a different plane with a different body. The last conscious thought-moment of the preceding life conditions the first thought-moment of the succeeding life. Both these thoughts take the same "ārammaṇa" or object of thought. This will be explained in a subsequent chapter. Death of the body thus is no bar, or hindrance, to the continuation of this process of one thought giving rise to another.

VI. The Conscious Mind and the Unconscious Mind

In the last chapter it was shown that the mind is a changing process. This process manifests itself in two levels or streams—the "*vīthi citta*," or conscious mind, and "*bhavaṅga citta*," the unconscious or subconscious mind. Western psychologists postulate three streams or levels of mind—the conscious, the subconscious, and the unconscious. At the conscious level there is awareness of what one does or says. At the deeper subconscious level lie concealed all the impressions and memories of thoughts which have left the conscious mind. Many of these impressions can be recalled at will. Some of them on their own can re-enter the conscious mind. The deepest level is the unconscious, where also there lie concealed past impressions and memories of thoughts which passed through the conscious mind but they can never be recalled at will. On their own they may sometimes reappear in the conscious mind. They can however be drawn out by special methods such as hypnosis.

In Buddhist psychology these three levels are considered under two heads—*vīthi citta* and *bhavaṅga citta*. The conscious level is recognized and referred to as vīthi citta. The other two levels are together recognized and referred to by one name—bhavaṅga citta. They are not considered as two distinct and separate compartments. Even Western psychology admits that there are no well-defined boundaries between the subconscious mind and the unconscious mind, since each merges into the other. Bhavaṅga citta is the hidden repository of all impressions and memories of thoughts that pass through the vīthi citta or conscious mind. All experiences and tendencies are stored up there, but from there they sometimes can exert an influence over the conscious mind without the conscious mind's being aware of the source of this influence. The Buddhist bhavaṅga citta is not identical with the unconscious of Western psychology, although in very many respects they are similar. Bhavaṅga citta is wider in scope than the Western unconscious, nor do the vīthi citta and bhavaṅga citta operate together at the same time, these two states of mind being conditioned by each other.

The state of active consciousness and awareness is generally present during the day when one is awake. It is then conscious of all impacts or impressions continually received from outside through the five senses, or of impressions received from within by way of ideas and thoughts or recollections of former thoughts. Therefore when one is awake the conscious mind is never doing nothing, since to be conscious is to be conscious of something, whether external or internal. When this vīthi citta, which is thus constantly receiving impressions from within or without, subsides into inactivity, as for instance during sleep, the other stream, the passive process of the unconscious or subconscious bhavaṅga manifests itself. This bhavaṅga citta is also called *vīthi mutta* in the sense that it is freed or released (*mutta*) from all conscious thought-processes (*vīthi*). This passive process then begins to flow on like an undisturbed stream so long as the conscious vīthi citta does not arise to disturb it. Such a disturbance will occur whenever sleep is disturbed through any of the five sense channels.

It is not only during sleep that the unconscious bhavaṅga citta manifests itself. When one is awake, every time an arisen thought of the conscious vīthi citta subsides and before the next thought could arise, within that infinitesimally minute fraction of time, the bhavaṅga citta intervenes. Then when the next thought of the conscious level arises, the unconscious bhavaṅga subsides into inactivity. Since innumerable thoughts arise and fall one after another during the day, as innumerable are these momentary interruptions to the flow of the unconscious bhavaṅga during the day.

Importance of Bhavaṅga Citta—its basic position

In a sense the passive bhavaṅga citta is more important than the conscious vīthi citta. Though the bhavaṅga citta is not consciously active, it is subconsciously active. It is referred to as a state of subliminal activity, viz. an activity that takes place below the threshold of the conscious mind, an activity of which therefore there is no awareness to the conscious mind. The conscious vīthi citta holds only one thought or idea at a time, whereas the subconscious or unconscious bhavaṅga citta holds all the impressions of all the thoughts, ideas and experiences that enter and leave the conscious vīthi citta. The bhavaṅga citta thus functions as a valuable mental storehouse or reservoir of impressions. Professor William James, speaking about the subconscious mind (which is one aspect of the bhavaṅga citta), says "that it is obviously the larger part of us, for it is the abode of everything that is latent, and the reservoir of everything that passes recorded and unobserved." (*Varieties of Religious Experience*).

Another feature of the bhavaṅga citta is that from time to time some of the thoughts, ideas and impressions that lie concealed in it can influence the conscious mind. They can also be drawn out or tapped by the method of hypnosis, which will be explained in a later chapter.

The appreciation of the significance of bhavaṅga is very necessary for understanding such mental phenomena as memory, which is otherwise unintelligible and becomes a complete mystery. In this connection it is useful to consider what Ven. Ñāṇatiloka Mahāthera has said in *Karma and Rebirth* (The Wheel No. 9):

> "The existence of the subconscious life-stream or bhavaṅga sota is a necessary postulate of our thinking. If whatever we have seen, heard, felt, perceived, thought, externally or internally experienced, and done, if all this, without exception, were not registered somewhere and in some way, be it in the extremely complex nervous system, or in the subconscious or unconscious, then we would not even be able to remember what we were thinking the previous moment, and we would not know anything of the existence of other beings and things, would not know our parents, teachers, friends and so on, would even not be able to think at all as thinking is conditioned by the remembrance of former experiences and our mind would be a complete tabula rasa and emptier than the actual mind of an infant just born, nay, even of the embryo in the mother's womb."

Apart from its function as a mental storehouse of impressions, the unconscious bhavaṅga citta performs a very important function, as its etymology connotes. The word bhavaṅga made up as it is of *bhava* (existence) and *aṅga* (factor) indicates that the bhavaṅga citta is the factor or indispensable basis of existence. The sub-commentary Vibhāvini Tīkā defines it thus: *"Avicchedappavatti-hetu-bhāvena bhavassa aṅgabhāvo bhavaṅgaṃ"* … "the factor of life by means of which the flow of existence or being is maintained without a break"… This then is the most important function of the bhavaṅga citta. It functions as an indispensable and continuing basis or undercurrent of existence. In this sense, it is called *bhavaṅga sota* (stream of flow of bhavaṅga). It has also been called "the function of being" and as such it keeps life going. Western writers have aptly called it "life-continuum."

The Ven. Ñāṇatiloka Mahāthera in his *Buddhist Dictionary* states:

> "This so-called subconscious life-stream or undercurrent of life which certain modern psychologists call the unconscious or the soul, is that by which might be explained the faculty of memory, the problem of telekinesis, mental and physical growth, kamma and rebirth, etc."

Shwe Zan Aung in his introduction to the *Compendium of Philosophy* gives this helpful description of the bhavaṅga citta or stream of being, in respect of its higher function:

"The stream of being then is an indispensable condition or factor, the sine qua non of present conscious existence; it is the *raison d'etre* of individual life; it is the life-continuum. It is as it were the background on which thought-pictures are drawn. It is comparable to the current of a river when it flows calmly on, unhindered by any obstacle, unruffled by any wind, un-rippled by any wave, and neither receiving any tributary waters nor parting with its contents to the world. And when that current is opposed by any obstacle of thought from the world within or perturbed by tributary streams of the senses from the world without then thoughts (vīthi citta) arise. But it must not be supposed that the stream of being is a sub-plane from which thoughts rise to the surface. There is a juxtaposition of momentary states of consciousness, subliminal and supraliminal, throughout a lifetime and from existence to existence. But there is no superposition of such states."

VII. Thoughts, Thought-Processes, and Thought-Moments

In any language, certain words and expressions are loosely used, more for the sake of convention than precision. Thus we speak of the sun rising and setting though in reality it does not do so. In Chapter V we learnt that the "mind" is not anything permanent and stable, whereas that word is loosely used to denote such a state. In this chapter we shall be learning that the word "thought", like "mind", is also loosely used. As McDougall says in his book *Psychology*, "When we come to describe the facts of consciousness we find that the notions and the words in popular use are very inadequate to the work of analytic description."

What is thought?

Thought is the consciousness or awareness of anything. The object of thought may be external or internal. There is never a moment when a man is without a thought, either in the conscious or unconscious state. In Buddhist psychology one does not speak of a thought, but of a thought-process, since thought is not a unity. So what is loosely called a thought is really a thought-process. As Joseph Jestrow, the author of *Effective Thinking* says, "Thinking is just a convenient name for a complex group of mental processes."

What is a thought-process?

We have already learnt that the mind is an endless succession of thoughts, each following the next with such a rapidity of succession as to give it the semblance of something permanent and stable, whereas in reality it is not a unity but a process, with this difference that it is a limited process—a process of 17 thought-moments each following the other. So that, what we loosely call a thought, is a thought-process. When a man sees a tree and instantly recognizes it as a tree, it means that there arose in him an awareness or consciousness of the tree, but this does not arise by one single mental operation. Before this awareness or consciousness or thought of the tree completely arose, 17 stages or thought-moments would have occurred. The man may not be conscious of all these 17 stages or thought-moments, since some of these mental processes, especially the earlier processes occur in the bhavaṅga or unconscious state of the mind. Although as many as 17 stages or thought-moments are necessary to conclude and complete one single thought-process, it is wrong to imagine that much time is involved in the process. On the contrary, in trying to emphasize the extreme shortness of time taken, commentators resort to a comparison with a flash of lightning or a twinkling of the eye. So infinitesimally brief is the period of time involved. What these 17 stages or thought-moments are will be explained in the next chapter.

What is a thought-moment?

The unit of measure for the duration of a thought-process is a thought-moment (*cittakkhaṇa*), which is also an infinitesimally small division of time. All thought-moments rise up in the conscious vīthi citta, remain there for just a fleeting moment and then sink down to the unconscious bhavaṅga citta, just as waves of the ocean rise up, remain there for a fleeting moment and then subside. Thought-moments therefore have the following three stages: (1) The genetic stage or nascent stage (*uppāda*); (2) the continuing stage (*tithi*) (3) the cessant stage (*bhavaṅga*): These three stages also occur within the shortest possible time. A thought-moment does not persist by itself but runs most rapidly from the first to the second stage and from the second to the third.

Thought-moments and thought-processes

As stated earlier, a thought-process is made up of 17 thought-moments, and a thought-moment is made up of 3 stages. 17 thought-moments must arise, remain and pass away to conclude and complete one single thought-process. When the cessant stage of the 17th thought-moment passes away and before the genetic or nascent stage of the first thought-moment in the next thought-process arises, at this particular juncture, since one thought-process has completed itself, the conscious vīthi citta subsides and the unconscious bhavaṅga citta reappears into activity. This unconscious bhavaṅga citta also does not remain long. It too remains for just a fleeting moment and then subsides to enable the next thought-process to arise in the conscious vīthi citta. This too then runs its course of 17 stages or thought-moments, and then the bhavaṅga citta again appears. In this manner the unending stream of mental processes flows on and on.

It is a mistake to think that these various mental states are joined together like carriages of a train to form a somewhat jagged combination. Each mental stage merges completely into the next. There are no sharp dividing lines between one mental stage and the next. Hence there is no sharp dividing line between the nascent stage of one thought-moment and its continuing stage or between its continuing stage and its cessant stage. Similarly there is no sharp dividing line between one thought-process and another. Although the bhavaṅga citta is said to appear when one conscious thought-process is over and before another begins, here too, there is no sharp dividing line since, as stated in an earlier chapter, vīthi citta merges into the unconscious bhavaṅga, there being no sharp dividing lines between the two. Everywhere and under all circumstances each mental stage merges into the next. So also the last conscious mental stage of the dying man merges into the first mental stage of the prenatal child in the life hereafter, distance being no bar since these are psychic phenomena and not physical phenomena. To be more precise, the resultant of the last conscious mental state of the dying man, along with certain physical factors, go to form the mind-body of the embryo in the life hereafter. This will be explained in a later chapter.

VIII. How A Normal Thought-Process Works

In the last chapter we learnt that what we loosely call a thought is a thought-process, and that it consists of 17 stages or thought-moments. In the present chapter it will be shown how a normal thought-process works. The two subsequent chapters will explain respectively how the thought-process at death works and how the thought-process at birth works.

Let us now trace the interesting course of a single normal thought-process through the 17 stages or thought-moments that constitute it, as explained in the commentaries. Here is the order of their occurrence in the normal case.

Order of a Normal Thought-Process

1. *Bhavaṅga atīta* (past unconscious)
2. *Bhavaṅga calana* (vibration of the *bhavaṅga*)
3. *Bhavaṅga upaccheda* (arrest of the *bhavaṅga*)
4. *Pañcadvāra āvajjana* (five-door advertence)
5. *Pañca viññāṇa* (fivefold consciousness)
6. *Sampaṭicchana* (reception)
7. *Santīraṇa* (investigation)
8. *Votthapana* (decision)

9–15. *Javana* (thought-impulsions)

16 & 17. *Tad ālambana* (registration of the experience)

1st Thought-moment: past unconscious (*bhavaṅga atīta*)

We must commence tracing from the stage immediately prior to the running of the conscious process. That is the stage when the conscious vīthi citta is in abeyance, and the stream of the unconscious bhavaṅga citta is flowing undisturbed. Such a state is present for instance, in a man who is enjoying deep sleep, when the mind does not respond to external objects or stimuli. This then is regarded as the first stage for the purpose of investigation, though actually the process has not yet begun. (This first stage is also present during that brief interval of time when one conscious thought has subsided and before the next arises).

2nd Thought-moment: vibration of the bhavaṅga (*bhavaṅga calana*)

Suppose now an external object or stimulus by way of a sight or sound or other sense-impression (any stimulus that attracts any of the senses) is received by the sleeping man—the flow of the unconscious bhavaṅga citta is disturbed. This is the second thought-moment or stage. It can also arise in the waking state after one conscious thought has subsided and before the next arises. The mind is then in the bhavaṅga state for a "very short" while ("*calana*" means shaking or vibrating). The bhavaṅga flow now begins to vibrate. This vibration lasts for one thought-moment before it subsides, and is compared by Shwe Zan Aung, the translator of the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha* (in his introduction), to the vibration of a spinning top whose velocity is falling. This is the result of the stimulus or object trying to force its attention on the conscious mind by impeding the flow of the bhavaṅga stream of unconsciousness.

3rd Thought-moment: arrest of the bhavaṅga (*bhavaṅga upaccheda*).

This is the stage when the stream of the bhavaṅga citta is arrested or cut off ("*upaccheda*" means cutting off). As a result, the vīthi citta or the conscious process arises, and begins to flow, but this stimulus or object is not yet cognized by it.

4th Thought-moment: five-door apprehending consciousness (*pañcadvāra āvajjana*)

This is the stage when a start is made by the conscious vīthi citta to cognize the object which has arrested the flow of the unconscious bhavaṅga. This stage is called *pañcadvāra*, *āvājjana* because there is turning round to find out through which of the five sense-doors the stimulus is coming ("*pañcadvārā*" means five doors and "*āvajjana*" means turning towards). There is thus an adverting towards the stimulus or object through one of the five sense-channels of sight, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. At this stage the sleeping man just awakened is turning towards something which calls for attention but knows nothing more about it. This is sometimes compared to the action of the spider to find out the cause that disturbed his web. The smooth flowing of this bhavaṅga undisturbed by any activity of the vīthi citta, is compared to the stillness of the spider resting motionlessly at the centre of his web. When an insect enters the web and is entangled in one of its threads, the web begins to vibrate and thereafter the spider turns to see in which thread something lies entangled. This is exactly the function of this thought moment of *pañcadvārāvājjana*. The sleeping man just awakened from his sleep is trying to find out through which of the five sense-doors the stimulus came. Is it a sight or sound or other sense-impression? He continues to watch. It is still a dim-awareness of something. If attention is aroused not externally through the five senses but internally through a thought, the stage is known as manodvārāvajjana (mind-door advertence). This is alternative to the five sense-door advertence. The course of such a thought-process is slightly different from the process now described, since the thought-moments 5th to 8th do not occur.

5th Thought-moment: five-fold consciousness (*pañca viññāṇa*)

Now follows a consciousness of the kind that apprehends the particular sense-impression caused by the stimulus ("*pañca*" means five and "*viññāṇa*" means consciousness). If it is a sight it is *cakkhu viññāṇa* or visual consciousness that works. If it is a sound it is *sota viññāṇa* or auditory consciousness that works. In this way in respect of every one of the sense-organs there is a particular sense-consciousness and this sense-consciousness begins to work. Yet there is no full comprehension of the stimulus. What appears through one of the sense-doors is merely sensed.

6th Thought-moment: reception (*sampaṭicchana*)

This is the thought-moment which occurs when the sense-impression caused by the stimulus is properly received. What is sensed is now received. ("*sampaṭicchana*" means receiving).

7th Thought-moment: investigation (*santīraṇa*)

After the function of receiving, there arises the function of investigation. This thought-process performs the function of investigating with discrimination the stimulus or object which caused the sense-impression. What is received is investigated. ("*santīraṇa*" means investigation).

8th Thought-moment: decision (*votthapana*)

This is the thought-moment when a decision is made regarding the stimulus which caused the sense-impression ("*votthapana*" means decision). What is investigated is decided on or determined.

9th to 15th Thought-moments: thought-impulsions (*javana*)

Now follows the psychologically important stage of *javana* or apperception or impulsion which lasts for seven thought moments (at the time of death, only five such moments occur). It is a stage of introspection followed by action. The psychological importance of these thoughts cannot be over-emphasized. Javana is derived from the Pali verb *javati* which means to run, and also to impel or incite. Hence these mental states, unlike the previous mental states, run for several thought moments and their one function is to impel. These are implosions which flash forth at the climax of a process of consciousness of the vīthi citta. Hence one is now fully conscious of the object or stimulus in all its relations, this being the stage of maximum cognition. It is at this stage that kamma begins to operate for good or bad, for this is the stage when the element of free will is present. All other stages of the vīthi process are like reflex actions. They must occur. Javana is the only stage where man is relatively free to think and to decide. There is the element of choice in this important thought moment, and it has the power to affect one's future according to the nature of the volition. If the sense-object that entered the mind had been rightly comprehended (*yoniso manasikāra*), free from the impurities of lust, hatred and delusion, harmonious results will follow. If it had been wrongly comprehended (*ayoniso manasikāra*), disharmonious results will follow. Javana in this context is a difficult word to be rendered into English. Professor Rhys Davids in his *Pali Dictionary* says that as the 12th stage in the course of an act of the vīthi citta, javana means "going" not by way of swiftness but as intellectual movement. It is the stage of full perception or apperception.

Mrs. Rhys Davids refers to javana as "the mental aspect or parallel of that moment in the nerve-process when central function is about to become efferent activity or innervation." Innervation being a reference to the nervous influences necessary for the maintenance of life and the functions of the various organs, the comparison is not inappropriate. But she herself has stated that she spent hours on this word, and finding no appropriate rendering was content to use the word un-translated. Shwe Zan Aung's introduction to the *Compendium of Philosophy* refers to the javana stage as follows: "Now intervenes the apperceptive stage of full cognition, wherein the object determined or integrated by the foregoing activity is apperceived or properly cognized. This is held to occupy ordinarily seven thought-moments or none at all, except in cases of death, stupefaction, creation of phenomena, and other special cases when a less number of moments than seven obtains. At this stage of apperception, the subject interprets the sensory impression and fully appreciates the objective significance of his experience."

16th and 17th Thought-moments: registration of the experience: (*tadālambana*)

These are the two resultant thought-moments following immediately after the javana thought-moments. Their only function is to register the impression made by the javana thought-moments. They are not an integral part of the conscious vīthi process. They are merely a recall of an experience that is passing away. If the impression made is not strong they do not occur at all. *Tadālambana*, derived from *tadārammaṇa* means "that object." It is so called because it takes the same object as that of the foregoing javana impulsions and has been compared in the *Visuddhi Magga* to the current of water that follows for a short while the boat which is going upstream (chapter XIV).

The 17 thought-moments in general

It must not be forgotten that these seemingly long 17 thought-moments constitute just one single thought-process, which takes place within an infinitesimally small fraction of time. The progress of this process varies with the intensity of the stimulus. If the intensity is very great (*atimahanta*), the complete process takes place. If it is great (*mahanta*), the 16th and 17th moments of registration do not occur. If it is small (*paritta*) or very small (*atiparitta*), the process works functionally only, without full cognition.

The classic simile of a falling mango

These 17 thought-moments are compared by commentators to the 17 stages that occur between a man sleeping and the self-same man eating a mango that falls by his side. A man is found sleeping soundly at the foot of a mango tree with his head covered. A wind blows and moves the branches of the tree causing a ripe mango to fall by his side. He is aroused from his sleep by this sound. He sees the fallen mango. He picks it up and examines it. Finding it to be desirable fruit he eats it, and after swallowing the last morsels, he replaces his head covering and resumes his sleep.

The sleep of the man represents the unconscious bhavaṅga stream flowing undisturbed. The striking of the wind against the tree represents atīta bhavaṅga or past unconscious. The sleeper is not disturbed. The sleep continues. So does the bhavaṅga. The moving of the branches represents the vibration of the bhavaṅga. The sleep is disturbed. So is the bhavaṅga. The falling of the mango represents the arrest of the bhavaṅga. The awakening of the man represents pañcadvārāvajjana or the arousing of attention through the five-door channels of sense. The removal of the head covering and the use of his eyes to observe the mango is *cakkhu viññāṇa*, or visual consciousness, which is one of the five types of consciousness together known as *pañca viññāṇa*. The picking up of the fruit represents sampaṭicchana or reception, and the examination of it represents santīraṇa or investigation. The finding of the fruit as a desirable mango is votthapana or decision. The eating of the fruit represents the apperceptive acts of the seven javana thought-moments. The swallowing of the last morsels left it the mouth represents tadālambana or registration of the impression. The man's resumption of his sleep after replacing his head covering represents the bhavaṅga citta resuming to flow smoothly and undisturbed.

IX. How a Thought-Process at Death Works

Now that we have studied how thought-processes work in normal circumstances during life, we should be able to follow without difficulty the next study, namely, the manner in which thought-processes work at the moment of death. Only this understanding will help us to appreciate what follows death in the psychic plane. In no other way can rebirth be understood.

Effect of death on body

Man is a psychophysical unit, a mind-body combination, (*nāma-rūpa*). The body and the mind co-exist in a close association with each other, like the flower and its scent. The body is like the flower and the mind is like the scent, and death is merely the separation of these two co-existing items. When a man is on the point of dying, his body and mind (*nāma-rūpa*) are weak. It may be that right up to the point of death he was strong in every way, but at the very point of death he is weak. This is because from the seventeenth thought-moment reckoned backwards from the point of death, no renewed physical functioning occurs. This is just like a motorist releasing the accelerator before stopping, so that no more pulling power is given to the engine. Similarly no more material qualities born of kamma (*kammaja rūpa*) arise, while those which have already come into being before the stage of that thought moment, will persist till the time of death-consciousness (*cuti citta)*, and then they will cease. As there is no more renewal of material qualities the whole process becomes weaker and weaker. It is like the fading light of an oil lamp when no more oil is found.

When the mind-body combination ceases to exist as a combination, neither body nor mind is destroyed or annihilated. These combining parts continue separately without a break, their respective processes of changing from one condition or state to another, from moment to moment, although the two processes have now parted company. The bodily part (like old clothes once worn but now discarded by the owner) will start a separate process of change, a process of gradual decay (*rūpaṃ jirati*—the body decays), but there is no annihilation. Matter is energy and cannot be lost or destroyed. The constitutes of the body, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, will change into the elements that composed it, some into "air" as gases, some into "water" as fluids and others into "earth" as minerals. The elements too cannot be destroyed or lost but only their form will change. In this manner the process of change will persist so far as the bodily counterpart of man is concerned.

Effect of death on mind

Now what of the mental counterpart (*nāma*)? The mental counterpart also, like the physical counterpart, continues without interruption its process of changing from one condition or state to another, though no more in association with its physical counterpart. Thought, like matter, is energy and cannot be destroyed or annihilated. We have learnt that the mind is not anything permanent or fixed, that it is not a unity but is a series (*santati*) of thoughts one following the other with such a rapidity that it gives the illusion of permanency and fixity. Death is no interruption to the progress of this series and no bar to the continuity of this process.

This principle of thought following thought does not end with death, because in the last thought-process before death, the terminal thought-moment, known as *maraṇāsaññā javana citta* (death-proximate mind), though weak by itself and unable to originate a thought, derives a great potency by reason of the appearance of one of three powerful thought-objects that enter the threshold of the dying mind.

Appearance of three powerful thought-objects or death signs

These thought-objects the dying man is powerless to resist. These powerful thought-objects are certain death signs and will be explained later. Thus the dying mind, although it lacks the power to originate a thought, gets a powerful push or drive by reason of the appearance of one of these three powerful thought-objects or death signs, and is thereby able to cause another thought to arise. This succeeding thought is *paṭisandhi viññāṇa* (rebirth consciousness or re-linking consciousness). Where it arises and how will be considered later.

Dying thought-process is unfailing

However unconscious a dying man may appear to be to bystanders, it does not mean that this last mental process is not operating within him. This process will always arise at the dying moment whatever the circumstances of the death may be, or however sudden and unexpected the death may be. It is said in the commentaries, that even if a man is suddenly thrown into the water and is immediately drowned, there is yet time before his death for this terminal thought-process to work. So also it is said that even in the case of a fly which is crushed to death on an anvil by the stroke of a hammer, there is yet time before its death for the terminal thought-process to work.

Thought is energy. It is also creative energy. Apart from the fact that any thought if sufficiently intense can under certain circumstances be a causative and creative agent, the terminal *maraṇasaññā javana* thought, deriving as it does its strength from one of the powerful thought-objects or death signs mentioned earlier (and which will be fully explained later), can find no difficulty in causing the *paṭisandhi viññāṇa* (rebirth consciousness or re-linking-consciousness) to arise in an appropriate place. Where that appropriate place is will be explained later.

Reproductive kamma

It may also be mentioned here that the appearance of any one of these three powerful thought-objects or death signs is conditioned by no other circumstances than the actions of the dying man himself during his lifetime. The particular type of kamma which operates at this juncture is the so-called *janaka kamma* (reproductive kamma), since it is the past actions of the dying man that conduce to his being born again, the thought-objects being a reflex of his own actions.

It will now be easy to trace the course of this last thought-process of the dying man. This thought-process does not contain so many stages as the normal thought-process that was earlier examined. The order of this process is as follows:

Order Of A Dying Thought-Process

1. Bhavaṅga atīta (past unconsciousness).
2. Bhavaṅga calana (vibration of the bhavaṅga).
3. Bhavaṅga upaccheda (arrest of the bhavaṅga).
4. Manodvārāvajjana (advertence through mind-door).
5. Maraṇasanna javana citta (death proximate javana impulsions or terminal javana thought-moments).
6. Tadālambana (registration of the experience).
7. Cuti citta (death consciousness).

8. Paṭisandhi viññāṇa (re-linking consciousness or rebirth consciousness occurring in the subsequent life).

*1. Past unconscious (***bhavaṅga atīta***)*

The same remarks that were made about bhavaṅga atīta when a normal thought-process was being traced are applicable here also. Here too we commence tracing from the stage immediately prior to the running of the death-process in the conscious vīthi citta. This would be when the mind is in the bhavaṅga state, which occurs either at sleep or immediately after one conscious thought-process of the vīthi citta has ceased and before another commences. This then is regarded as the first stage for the purpose of investigation, though actually the process has not yet started.

2.- 3. Vibration of bhavaṅga (bhavaṅga calana) and Arrest of the bhavaṅga (bhavaṅga upaccheda)

The remarks made about these two stages when a normal thought-process was being examined are applicable here also. Here too a stimulus first causes only a disturbance or vibration of the bhavaṅga stream of unconsciousness that is flowing through the mind of the dying man. Later, as the stimulus persists the flow of the bhavaṅga is completely arrested. The dying man is still not able to recognize or comprehend the stimulus that is at work. This stimulus now is none other than one of those three powerful thought-objects or death signs which will be fully explained later.

*4. Advertence through the mind-door (***manodvārāvajjana***)*

When the normal thought-process was being examined, reference was made to a stage called "advertence through the five sense-doors". This occurs when the stimulus is capable of being recognized through one or the other of the five sense-channels: of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. In the case of a dying thought-process this stage of sense-door advertence does not generally occur, since the stimulus that arises to disturb the bhavaṅga of the dying man is not an external stimulus but is internal in nature, being a thought or memory, and is capable of being recognized only through the mind channel. Hence the stage that arises is called "advertence through the mind-door."

*5. Death-proximate javana impulsions or terminal javana thought-moments (***maraṇasaññā javana citta***)*

Now comes the psychologically important stage of impulsions known as *javana*. Everything that was said about this stage, when the normal thought-process was being examined, is applicable here, except that since death is imminent, this mental state of javana runs for five thought-moments and not seven. It must also be remembered as stated before that the dying man, being weak, cannot originate a thought on his own. One of three powerful thought-objects or death signs will present itself to him, disturb the smooth flow of his bhavaṅga, cause it to subside and induce the vīthi citta or conscious mind to arise. After the conscious process has passed through the stage of bhavaṅga-vibration, bhavaṅga-arrest and mind-door advertence just described, the present important stage of javana-impulsions is reached. It is now that the conscious mind or vīthi citta is fully able to comprehend the stimulus that awakened it.

The Powerful Thought-Objects or Death-Signs Explained

The three stimuli, one of which is said to present itself before the threshold of the dying mind, are equally powerful. Not only does this thought-object become the thought-object of the *maraṇasaññā javana* thoughts (the thought-impulsions at death), it also becomes the thought-object of the paṭisandhi viññāṇa (rebirth consciousness) of the next life, and of the bhavaṅga citta of the next life. These last two mental states just mentioned are not of the conscious type but of the unconscious (bhavaṅga) type. They too, though not conscious, require a thought-object for their existence. They take for their thought-object the particular thought-object entertained in the terminal javana thought, viz. one of the three death signs. Thus the thought-object of the last conscious thought before death becomes the thought-object of the first thought in the new life. Thus the process of life goes on, each thought giving rise to another, each life giving rise to another. Thought, it must be remembered, is energy. It cannot be lost or destroyed. It goes on producing its results, and they in turn produce theirs, though not necessarily in the same plane or sphere. Thus the continuity of the being is maintained.

It is not any random thought-object that appears at this terminal stage to disturb the bhavaṅga of the dying man, nor is it a thought-object of the dying man's choice, as he is unable to originate a thought on his own at this terminal stage. It is, as stated before, conditioned by no other circumstances than the actions of the dying man himself during his life time. By the operation of *janaka kamma* (reproductive kamma) the memory of certain powerful actions of the past performed by the dying man, thrusts itself before his mind and constitutes the thought-object of the terminal thought—the maraṇasañña javana citta. The subsequent thought is determined by the nature of this terminal thought. No thought can function without an object of thought (*ārammaṇa*), either in the conscious or in the unconscious state. The three powerful-objects of thought or death signs, one of which arises at the terminal stage, are as follows:

(i) Kamma

The memory of a very important and weighty act, good or bad, performed shortly before his death will come to him, however sudden be his death or however unconscious he may be to his surroundings. Such an act is known as āsanna kamma, i.e., an act done when death is nearby. In the large majority of cases no such good act is done just before the advent of death, the time of which is not known beforehand. In the absence of such an act good or bad, then the memory of any act habitually performed by him will present itself to the dying man. This act is called āciṇṇa kamma, i.e., the practised act or habitual act. The moral or immoral consciousness experienced at the time of the commission of the death-proximate act or the habitual act now arises as a fresh consciousness at the dying moment.

(ii) Kamma nimitta

To the dying man a memory may sometimes present itself not of any act done, good or bad, recent or habitual, but of something symbolic of the act done by him ("kamma" means action, and "nimitta" means sign or symbol). Thus a butcher may see a knife, or a drunkard may see a bottle, or a pilgrim may see a shrine. These are seen through the mind's eye, i.e., through the mind-avenue and not through the physical eye.

(iii) Gati nimitta

The object of a dying man's last thought may also be some indication or anticipation of the place where he is to be reborn. Thus fire may present itself to the mind's eye of the person destined to be reborn in hell, and one whose destiny is the world of gods may see beautiful flowers and beautiful mansions. Dr. W. T. Evans-Wentz in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* has referred to certain cases of persons who have had at the time of death premonitory visions of their future destiny. It is also fairly well known both in Ceylon, (now Sri Lanka), and elsewhere that some dying persons have given utterance to such visions experienced by them. There was a genuine case at

Kalutara (Ceylon/Sri Lanka) where a dying girl of twelve cheerfully told her parents standing sorrowfully by her bedside, that a beautiful carriage decked with garlands of beautiful flowers was waiting to take her away.

6. Registration of the experience (tadālambana)

After the stage of *maraṇasaññā javana citta*, there arises in the death-process the stage of tadālambana, which has also been earlier commented on. It merely registers the experience of the impression received and is not of much importance psychologically. There are no effects resulting from it.

7. Death consciousness (cuti citta)

This is the last thought to be experienced in the present life. ("*Cuti*" means disappearance or death.) There is now to the dying mind an awareness of death. It is not the conscious vīthi citta that experiences this awareness. It is experienced by the bhavaṅga citta. Being the last bhavaṅga thought of the present life, it takes for its object, the object of the first bhavaṅga thought of the next life, i.e., the paṭisandhi viññāṇa of the present life. *Cuti citta* is also not of much importance psychologically. It does not produce any results. It is merely a consciousness of death. Hence what is regarded as the terminal thought is not the cuti citta but the *maraṇāsaññā javana citta*.

8. Re-linking consciousness (paṭisandhi viññāṇa)

The next stage in the process, though not arising in the mind of the dying man, is the highly important stage of *paṭisandhi viññāṇa*, re-linking consciousness or rebirth consciousness. The process of one thought leading to another though not in the same personality, can be appreciated if we desist from regarding the mind as some permanent unchanging unit. If on the other hand we regard the mind (as in reality it is) as a series or succession of mental states, it is not difficult to imagine how one mental state in one life can give rise to another mental state in another life. It is the mental state known as *maraṇasaññā javana citta*, the terminal mental state of the dying man that gives rise to the paṭisandhi viññāṇa or re-linking consciousness in another life. Paṭisandhi Viññāṇa is aptly rendered as re-linking consciousness ("*paṭisandhi*" literally means "re-joining"), since it links up the present life with the next. That is why the thought-objects of both mental states are the same. In other words, the thought-object of the terminal dying thought becomes the thought-object of the resultant paṭisandhi viññāṇa. A thorough comprehension of paṭisandhi viññāṇa is absolutely essential for an understanding of the mechanism of rebirth. In the first instance, it must be understood that it is not the cuti citta but the preceding maraṇasaññā javana citta that gives rise to the paṭisandhi viññāṇa. Cuti citta is an unconscious thought of the bhavaṅga citta, whereas the terminal maraṇasaññā javana citta is a thought of the conscious vīthi citta. There is a belief that the cuti citta gives rise to the paṭisandhi viññāṇa. This is not correct, since, as stated earlier, the cuti citta (death consciousness) is merely a registering agent and performs no active function which can give rise to any result. Though it is the last thought in the dying process, it is an unconscious thought. It merely registers the awareness of death. In conformity with the law of change, the law of becoming, the law of continuity, the law of action and reaction and the law of attraction, the terminal maraṇasaññā javana citta (death proximate javana thought) receives one of those three powerful terminal thought-objects or death signs referred to earlier, as its thought-object, and then by reason of the operation of the same laws just mentioned, gives rise to the paṭisandhi-viññāṇa—a thought of the unconscious type (bhavaṅga) which forms the nucleus of the next life.

When it is said that the *maraṇasaññā javana citta* of the dying man gives rise to the paṭisandhi-viññāṇa, we must realize that the former mental state causes the latter mental state to arise, it being the causative factor. For such a highly important result to arise, the causative factor must necessarily be just as powerful. Let us examine the source of its potency.

Potency of the terminal *maraṇasaññā* thought

We know that there is creative power in thought if it is sufficiently intense. The very first stanza of the Dhammapada which was earlier cited refers to the supremacy of the mind (mano seṭṭha) and to the fact that everything is mind-born (mano-maya). In his book Thoughts are Things, W. W. Atkinson has one full chapter entitled "Creative Thought." He says: "Science perceives the constant effort of the inner to express itself in the outer—the invisible trying to be visible, the un-manifest trying to be manifest … Thoughts strive to take form in action. Thoughts strive ever to materialize themselves in objective material form."

Apart from this inherent creative power of thought, the terminal thought is the last active thought of the dying man. We can therefore justifiably expect the last thought to be the most forceful. The last spurt of a runner in a race often discloses his greatest strength. At its last fruit-bearing season a dying tree is said to yield its largest produce. Often the highest and greatest manifestation of any force or power is a type of swan song preceding its own disruption or dissolution. Since the desire for existence (*taṇhā*) is the predominating motive underlying well-nigh all the activities of man, at the moment of death it grows so formidable that it adopts a grasping attitude (mentally). As the Buddha himself has said (and this too was cited earlier), at the dying moment this predominating taṇhā becomes a grasping force (*upādāna*) that attracts to itself another existence. It is the last thought-process that carries with it this grasping force.

Psychology tells us that the last thought prior to sleep is very powerful and influences the first thought in the morning at the time of awakening. It is a common experience that if one wishes to catch an early morning train and if he retires to bed suggesting to himself that he should awake in time for the train, then he is certain to awake in good time for the train, however much a late riser he may habitually be. The success of the auto-suggestive affirmations prescribed by the famous healer Emile Coué of Nancy are due to the fact that they are practised by his patients just before they retire to sleep. Anything suggested to the mind at this time tends to produce a powerful effect. The mind is highly receptive to suggestion at this time. As stated in *Psychology and Practical Life* by Collins and Drever (the former is a lecturer and the latter a professor of psychology at the University of Edinburgh), "Natural suggestibility is enhanced by certain conditions. In the states grouped together as "hypnoidal"- the state between sleep and waking, sleep itself, hypnosis—suggestibility is very high." These same authors refer to the employment within recent times of hypnosis in order to obtain anaesthesia for surgical operations.

There is thus recognition of the great creative value and potency of the last thought prior to sleep coming as it does so close to the time of activity of the powerful subconscious mind, for hardly anything else intervenes between this last thought and the arising of the subconscious mind which sleep induces. Hence, since the last conscious thought prior to sleep becomes the first thought when one awakes from his sleep, by a parity of reasoning is it too much to assume that his last conscious thought before the sleep of death—the terminal maraṇasaññā javana thought—becomes the first thought, the paṭisandhi viññāṇa of the next life to which he awakens?

The terminal thought is all concentrated energy, and as such it cannot die down although the man has died. Being creative energy it must manifest itself somewhere. As stated by Dr. E. R. Rost, "Therefore when a being dies, all the forces locked up in the brain and represented by

consciousness are not lost or dissipated in space, but, just as in this life there is the continuity of the sequence of consciousness in the life stream, so is there the continuity of the same life-stream at death. And as this life-stream requires for its functioning a nidus in the evolutionary scale of beings, so does it require, on its subjective side, the formation of an objective basis." (*Nature of Consciousness*).

So, according to Buddhism, this potent terminal thought, receiving as its object one of those three powerful thought-objects or death signs referred to earlier, must be deemed to be possessed of great creative power. Its function is referred to as "*abhinavakāraṇa*" i.e., the preparing of a new existence. It is for this purpose that one of the powerful thought-objects or death-signs appears before the mind of the dying man. Then, when the terminal thought receives this special thought-object and thereafter subsides, there will simultaneously arise in the next life the paṭisandhi citta carrying with it the same thought-object as that of the terminal thought. This paṭisandhi citta being something mental it can normally arise only in association with a physical counterpart. It therefore arises in a maternal womb—not haphazardly in any mother's womb but in an appropriate mother's womb in an appropriate environment, appropriate to the type of life led in the present existence. Man being a psychophysical combination, a nāma-rūpa or mind-body combination, the reborn man too is a mind-body combination. There is however nothing to prevent a man being reborn in the spirit world where he will have only mind but no body. Here too the paṭisandhi citta does arise.

It will thus be seen that it is the combined operation of all the fundamental laws or principles dealt with earlier in separate chapters that results in the phenomenon of rebirth. Those principles deal with change, becoming, continuity, cause and effect and attraction. The German Philosopher, Schopenhauer, most of whose views are very Buddhist, as stated by Ven. Ñyānajīvako Thera in *Schopenhauer and Buddhism* (The Wheel Nos. 144–146) has said: "At the hour of death all the mysterious forces (although really rooted in ourselves) which determine man's fate crowd together and come into action." These mysterious forces are none other than the fundamental laws just referred to. They are natural laws, mysterious only when we do not understand them. It is their combined operation that results in rebirth. Rebirth therefore is just a natural result of the operation of these natural laws.

X. How a Thought-Process at Birth Works

Now that we have studied the thought-process at death according to Buddhist psychology, we should turn our attention to the thought-process at birth. In the light of what has already been said about various mental states in Chapters VIII and IX entitled respectively "How a Normal Thought-process Works" and "How a Thought-process at Death Works," the thought-process at birth can easily be followed without much comment, since the mental states that occur in this process have already been studied in the earlier chapters. The order of the thought-process at birth, which involves 5 stages, is as follows:

1. *Paṭisandhi viññāṇa* (re-linking consciousness)
2. *Bhavaṅga citta* (the unconscious)
3. *Manodvārāvajjana* (mind-door advertence)
4. *Javana* (thought-impulsions)
5. *Bhavaṅga citta* (the unconscious)

1. Re-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi viññāṇa*)

In the list of mental states enumerated in the last chapter indicating the thought-process at death, the last mental state mentioned, viz. *paṭisandhi viññāṇa* or re-linking consciousness, is not a state occurring in the mind of the dying man, but it was nevertheless mentioned in that list because the other mental states in that list along with this re-linking consciousness form part of one continuous process. This paṭisandhi viññāṇa occurs in the mind of the reborn being, or, to be more precise, it occurs in the mind of the pre-natal being, viz. the embryo. In fact it is this paṭisandhi viññāṇa type of mental energy which, along with the parental sperm cells and ovum cells, combines to create an embryo in an appropriate mother's womb. Thus it is this re-linking consciousness (or rebirth consciousness) that starts the nucleus of a new mind-body combination, a new nāma-rūpa, in an appropriate mother's womb. This embryo then is a mixture of mind and matter. The parental sperm and ovum cells provide the material part of the embryo while the paṭisandhi viññāṇa or re-linking consciousness provides the mental part. It is this paṭisandhi viññāṇa which links the dying life with the new life. It becomes a link because it is a resultant of the terminal maraṇasaññā javana thought of the dying man and takes the same thought-object, viz. one of the three death-signs. The process of one thought giving rise to another never ends. The last conscious thought at the moment of death is no exception to this process. It too gives rise to another thought, though not in the same body. That other thought is the paṭisandhi viññāṇa. It lasts for just one moment, to be followed by the bhavaṅga citta or the unconscious.

2. The unconscious (*bhavaṅga citta*)

The initial paṭisandhi viññāṇa is thereafter succeeded by the bhavaṅga citta, which is said to last for 16 thought-moments: In this pre-natal stage, as the unborn being is still part of the body of the mother, it does not normally contact the external world. It is therefore the stream of bhavaṅga that keeps on flowing smoothly without an interruption in the pre-natal child-mind. As life had just commenced, this mental state is not full grown. This is how Shwe Zan Aung describes it in his appendix to The *Compendium of Philosophy*: "When a being is conceived, Buddhist belief gives him a congenital mind simultaneously with the inception of a physical growth as the result of the past janaka (generative) kamma. That mind at the moment of

conception is but a bare state of sub-consciousness identical with the more adult bhavaṅga consciousness during dreamless sleep."

3. Mind-door advertence (*manodvāra āvajjana*)

As stated earlier, the bhavaṅga citta lasts for 16 thought-moments and then subsides. This is followed by the mental state known as mind-door advertence (*manodvāra āvajjana*) The bhavaṅga nature of the mental state of the embryo gives way to the conscious vīthi citta on account of the desire that arises in the mind of the embryo for its new existence.

4. Thought-impulsion (*javana*)

Immediately after the mental state known as (*manodvāra āvajjana*) (mind-door advertence) has subsided, the state of javana or thought-impulsions arises. It carries further the thought that arose through the mind-door channel, viz. the desire for its new existence. These javana thought-impulsions develop this desire in the new being for its new existence (*bhava-nikanti javana*). They run for seven thought-moments.

5. The unconscious (*bhavaṅga citta*)

When the seven javana thought-moments have arisen and subsided, the smooth flow of the unconscious bhavaṅga again arises. It will flow on smoothly until something occurs to interrupt it, but this is hardly likely. When the pre-natal embryo is born and assumes a separate existence, it begins to contact the external world. The normal thought-process will then follow.

XI. The Biological Explanation of Birth and the Buddhist Explanation

Material sciences seek to explain birth only on a material basis on the premises of what can be seen, viz. the present life. Hence the biologist would say that the union of the sperm cells of the father and ovum cells of the mother result in the birth of a child and that the physical and mental characteristics of the child's parents and its ancestors influence the characteristics of the child. Biology being silent on any mental or psychic factor, knows of only two influencing and causative factors—heredity and environment. But is this a completely satisfying explanation? Take the case of two children of the same parents and of the same environment. How is it that one child from birth may be well-built, strong and healthy, while the other child from birth may be a weakling? An explanation may be offered by reference to the differing health conditions of the mother at the time of the two different births. Consider then the case of twins having the same heredity and same environment. How can the physical and mental differences that are often seen to exist between twin children be explained? Take the case of the well-known Siamese twins Chang and Eng who were conjoined to each other at the navel from birth. Here is a case of identically the same heredity and the same environment. Specialists who studied their behaviour when they arrived in London are reported to have said that they differ widely in temperament and that while Chang is addicted to liquor, Eng is a teetotaller. Can heredity and environment explain those startling cases of child prodigies so well known in the East as well as in the West, when not only the child's parents but even its ancestors on both sides have never exhibited such tendencies? These circumstances urge the thinking mind to consider whether there is not some other factor at work besides heredity and environment. It is wrong to expect a highly complex psychophysical organism like man to arise from the combination of two purely physical factors like the sperm cells and the ovum cells of the parents. It is only the intervention of the third factor, a psychic factor that can bring about the birth of a child. Wick and oil can never produce a flame. Not until a bright light comes from elsewhere will the action of wick and oil result in a flame. A plant is not the product of seed and soil only. From an extraneous source must come another factor, viz. light. Similarly the combination of two purely physical factors—the parental sperm and ovum—cannot provide the opportunity for the formation of an embryo which is a mixture of both mind and matter. A psychic factor must combine with the two physical factors, to produce the psychophysical organism that an embryo is.

Then again how does biology explain the determination of sex in an embryo? The embryo is supposed to derive its characteristics from what are known as the genes of the parents. The embryo is said to consist of the chromosomes of the female parent and the male parent in equal proportions and sex is determined by the way in which the chromosomes combine. The male cell is said always to contain one X chromosome and one Y chromosome. On the other hand the female cell is said to contain always two X chromosomes. At the time of conception, the male sperm cell uniting with the female ovum cell, a complete new cell is formed which later becomes the embryo. Sometimes the X and Y chromosomes combine to form a male cell while at other time they combine to form a female cell. Biology does not seem to be able to explain these differences in combination. So long as only the physical causes are reckoned with, no suitable explanation can ever be made.

In the *Encyclopaedia of the Biological Sciences* edited by Peter Gray, Professor of Biology, University of Pittsburgh (6th edition, 1968) the concluding paragraph of the long article under the head "Genetics" contains the following significant sentence: "Much of the picture of gene action is of course hypothetical and remains to be worked out in detail."

In *Biology for the Modern World* by C. H. Waddington, Professor of Animal Genetics, University of Edinburgh, in the chapter on "Sex and Reproduction" the following passage is found:

> "These chromosomes influence the type of hormone produced in the developing organism. An organism with an XX constitution produces female hormones. The presence of XY chromosomes on the other hand induces male hormones. In this system the differential which decides which of the basic potentialities shall be realized depends on the operation of one of the most reliable mechanisms in the body, namely the separation of pairs of chromosomes into single chromosomes at the time when the germ cells are formed. Very occasionally however the mechanism goes wrong … It is only in the last few years that the technique of examining human chromosomes has become refined to the point when abnormalities of the sex chromosomes can be reliably determined. We are therefore only at the beginning of the exploration of such abnormalities."

Although Professor Waddington refers to the separation of pairs of chromosomes into single chromosomes at the time when germ cells are formed, as one of the most reliable mechanisms in the body, yet it is most significant, that in almost the same breath he is constrained to admit that very occasionally the mechanism goes wrong. It has been found that sometimes although the correct proportions of the correct type of chromosomes are present which should result in the arising of a male embryo, yet it is not a male embryo that arises. Similarly sometimes with regard to a female embryo, although the chromosomal proportions are correct, genetically the results are different. Hence it is that in *Physician's Handbook*, a book written by four professors of medicine (Professors Krupp, Swertz, Jawetsz and Biglieri, 15th edition) under the chapter entitled "Chromosomal Sex Determination," this most significant sentence appears: "It is not yet possible to equate chromosomal sex with genetic sex."

In a foreword to Professor Waddington's book earlier referred to, Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, one time professor of philosophy, writes as follows: "The scientist is a dedicated servant of Truth. Because he deals with the world of nature, he is likely to overlook the role of the human spirit in scientific endeavour. If he believes that there is nothing more than the world of nature to which we are tied, he will suffer from an inner emptiness, anxiety, split consciousness. Man is essentially a subject and not a mere object, a thing among things. When this subjectivity is recognized, the distance between science and humanity is diminished."

In this connection, the words of Mrs. Annie Besant are worth quoting: "Modern science is proving more and more clearly that heredity plays an ever decreasing part in the evolution of the higher creatures, that all mental and moral qualities are not transmitted from parents to offspring and the higher the qualities the more patent is this fact. The child of a genius is at times a dolt. Commonplace parents give birth to a genius" (*Ancient Wisdom*).

Further in this connection, what Dahlke has to say is equally worth quoting:

> "When science teaches that I am descended wholly and entirely from my parents, it teaches that the I-process is not kindled at all but propels itself hither from parents, grandparents and so forth—does not burn—but rolls—so making necessary the question as to the first beginning of this motion; for everything set in motion urged outward—in short every reaction—must have a first moment of beginning. In contradistinction to science the Buddha teaches, 'The parents provide the material, the groundwork, but the I-energy of some disintegrated I-process corresponding uniquely to these potentialities sets all alight. Here I take rise in my parents as the fountain takes its rise in the hill. That the fountain does so is beyond all cavil, is patent to everyone, yet it is but an alien guest.' Thus the Buddha is the only one to abide by actuality, the only one with whom the entire miracle of

propagation takes its place among mundane events conforming likewise to the laws of mundane occurrence."

In his *The Buddha and his Teachings*, Ven. Nārada Mahāthera, while strongly expressing his view that heredity cannot account for the birth of a criminal in a long line of honourable ancestors or for the birth of a saint in a family of evil repute, quotes the following passage from Dr. Th. Pascal's book Reincarnation:

> "To return to the role played by the germ in the question of heredity, we repeat that the physical germ, of itself alone, explains only a portion of man; it throws light on the physical side of heredity but leaves, in as great a darkness as ever, the problem of moral and intellectual faculty. If it represented the whole man one would expect to find in any individual the qualities manifested in his progenitors and parents—never any other; these qualities could not exceed the amount possessed by the parents, whereas we find criminals from birth in the most respectable families and saints born to parents who are the very scum of society."

According to the Buddhist explanation of birth, as stated earlier, purely physical causative factors, like the parental sperm and ovum, cannot result in the arising of an embryo which is a combination of both mind and matter. Man is a psychophysical organism, and as such the causative factors must be both physical and psychical. In the Mahā Taṇhāsaṅkhaya Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya 38, the Buddha has said that apart from the union of father and mother, and the mother's proper time, there must also be the presence of, what the Buddha calls, the *gandhabba*. The word gandhabba literally means "a stranger" or "one come from afar." As a variation of gantabba, gerund of the verb *gacchati* (to go), it means "one who has to go." These meanings have reference to one who has died elsewhere, and have no reference to the parental factor. It refers to the mental content of the terminal thought of a dying person, which results in that psychically important *paṭisandhi viññāṇa* or re-linking consciousness which, combining with the parental sperm and ovum, helps to form the embryo. It is the energy potential released from a dying man. It is metaphorically "one come from afar" or "one who has to go," i.e., to go from the place where he was. *Paṭisandhi* means "re-linking." It is called re-linking-consciousness because it links the last consciousness of the dying mind with the first consciousness of the embryo. Both types of consciousness therefore have the same ārammaṇa or object of thought, viz. one or other of the three powerful death-signs.

This then is the new mental counterpart, the new nāma, which in a new mother's womb in association with the new rūpa—the new physical counterpart, viz. the new parental sperm cells and ovum cells will cause the arising of a fresh embryo, the nucleus of a new human life. This new human life cannot but be regarded as the resultant of the past human life. The thoughts, words and deeds (saṅkhāra) of the past life produced certain energies or kammic forces which at the end of that past life were potent enough to attract the necessary conditions for a new life in an appropriate place, according to the strength and quality of those forces, on the principle of "like attracts like" (law of attraction) and also by virtue of that other great law—the law of action and reaction. It is these forces that constitute the third causative factor of birth. It is a psychic factor and in the psychic plane time and distance do not count. It will thus be seen that these potential kammic energies work in conjunction with the biological laws to condition the formation of an embryo in an appropriate mother's womb. The Ven. Ñyānatiloka Mahāthera's explanatory comments on this point are worth reading:

> "With regard to the characteristic features, the tendencies and faculties lying latent in the embryo, the Buddha's teaching may be explained in the following way: The dying individual with his whole being convulsively clinging to life, at the very moment of his

death, sends forth karmic energies, which like a flash of lightning, hit at a new mother's womb ready for conception" (The Wheel No. 9: *Karma and Rebirth*).

Thus the process of a changing consciousness continues without interruption although in a different place or plane and the change of consciousness which takes place at the end of one life is no different in essence from the change of consciousness which takes place from moment to moment within one life.

XII. Recall of Past Lives through Hypnosis

The theory that all thoughts of incidents and events, of all feelings and desires that enter the conscious mind make their impressions in the unconscious before they fade away from the conscious mind, has been established beyond doubt by the researches of psychologists who study and practise the science of hypnosis. These impressions are all stored up in the great reservoir of the unconscious (*bhavaṅga citta*). It has been found that by the method known as hypnotic age-regression the memory not only of forgotten important events, but even of trivial incidents long since forgotten can be recalled from the unconscious mind. What the hypnotist does is first to induce sleep in the subject. In this sleep state the subject will answer truthfully any question put to him. The hypnotist by means of his voice keeps in touch with the subject and prevents normal sleep supervening. The hypnotically induced sleep is different from normal sleep. This is known as the hypnotic sleep or trance. The subject, when in this state, is asked questions relating to incidents starting from the time the subject came to the hypnotist, who then gradually regresses him to his earliest infancy, about which also the subject will be questioned. All these questions he will answer truthfully. On awaking to consciousness he will not remember anything of what he said or did. He will not even remember the fact of having been questioned. This is because it was not the conscious mind that answered. During the induced sleep the conscious mind was in abeyance and it was the unconscious mind that answered.

All the events of early childhood can thus be vividly recalled and, what is most interesting, they can also be vividly re-lived. Vivid re-living of forgotten experiences can take place in the hypnotic sleep, for in that condition, the conscious mind not being active, the unconscious is free to release memories of the forgotten incidents along with any very strong reactions to them that had been experienced at that time. This condition is technically called hypermnesia. For instance, if the forgotten incident is one of terror and fright, the hypnotized individual while recalling the incident may exhibit that same terror and fright. If it is an incident of intense sorrow which made him weep, then the hypnotized individual while recalling that incident may exhibit the same intense sorrow and may also weep. Such cases are quite common. Once a man of sixty was, under hypnosis, regressed to his childhood and was asked whether he had written in copy-books. He said he did. On being asked whether he can remember any particular line that he copied out, he said, "I can remember copying out the line 'a stitch in time saves nine'." Given pencil and paper and asked to write out that line, he—still in the unconscious state—wrote out that line not in the firm handwriting of an adult but in the unpractised shaky handwriting of a child. The hypnotized subject, however, on awaking to consciousness, could not remember anything that he has said or done, as nothing was done with the conscious mind. There is thus this twofold nature of the human mind—the conscious and the unconscious—the truth of which has been amply established by these hypnotic methods. As stated by Troward in the *Edinburgh lectures on Mental Science*, "The great truth which the science of hypnotism has brought to light is the dual nature of the human mind." It must also be mentioned that it is not everyone who responds to the method of hypnosis. There are cases of inherent natural resistance to hypnotic suggestion.

This method is not confined to recalling past memories of this life only. Psychologists have been able to obtain recall of memories of past lives in numerous recorded cases. Hypnotized persons, on being asked to go back in time and to mention their very earliest memories, have recalled incidents in their past lives which after an exhaustive and impartial examination have been found to be correct. There is room to mention one such case only. It is one of the earliest recorded cases.

Professor Theodore Flournoy of Geneva University hypnotized a Swiss girl who, after answering questions regarding her past in this life, was thereafter requested to recall her earliest time of living. She said she could remember her life as an Arab chief's daughter. She said she could remember her name at that time. It was Simandanee. She was able to speak Arabic as she did then. She remembered having married a Hindu raja called Sivruka. She was able to show her intimate knowledge about Indian dancing. She remembered her husband constructing a fortress called Chandragiri. Professor Flournoy wrote a book about this case after having verified these details from ancient documents, and Professor McDougall has referred to this case in his *An Outline of Abnormal Psychology*. This is just one of several hundreds of similar cases.

In this connection reference must be made to a book which was published in 1950 and created a great sensation. Within seven years it reached its 10th edition. The book is entitled *Many Mansions* and the authoress is Gina Cerminara. It deals with wonderful cures effected by one Edgar Cayce. His technique was to get himself hypnotized, and in that state he was able to discover the previous lives of his patients and find out the root cause, if such there is, of the illnesses from which they were in this life suffering. In that hypnotic state he would prescribe the cure, but on his awaking he would not remember what he had said. The patient or someone on his behalf had to question Edgar Cayce, and then he would answer and prescribe the cure. These answers were typed in duplicate. One given to the patient and the other filed for the record. They are called Readings and there at present over 20,000 such readings preserved at the Cayce Institute in Virginia Beach (U.S.A.).

XIII. Spontaneous Recall of Past Lives

There are numbers of cases of children who spontaneously come out with recollection of their past lives without the intervention of hypnosis.

Dr. Ian Stevenson, Professor of Psychiatry, University of Virginia, U.S.A., in his booklet entitled *The Evidence of Survival from Claimed Memories of Former Incarnations*, has dealt with several cases of spontaneous recall of past lives. This book was the winning essay of the contest in honour of Professor William James, the well-known psychologist. These cases, of which he gives a full description, are from various countries such as Cuba, India, France and Sicily. In Part II of this booklet he analyses the evidence, in order to consider whether there are other possible explanations for this recall of past lives, such as fraud, racial memory, extra-sensory perception, recognition and precognition. He also deals with reincarnation which he considers to be the most plausible explanation for these cases. In a later book entitled Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation he deals with further cases of spontaneous recall. Three of these cases are from Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

It is not everyone who is able to recall spontaneously the memory of a past existence. Such a recall is possible only in exceptional cases and that too in children only. Investigations have not yet reached the stage when it is possible to say in what cases a recall can take place, but it has been observed that in nearly all the cases of spontaneous recall the previous lives were cut off in early childhood by some form of violent death such as an accident or serious illness. It has also been observed that the child's memory of the previous life fades away as the child advances in age. There can be other reasons for the inability to recall past lives. For instance, if an individual's previous life was that of an animal, it is just possible that the animal mind not being so developed as the human mind, may not be able to register impressions with the clarity and accuracy of the human mind, with the result that such a reborn individual may not be able to recall his past at all. Hypnotic regression then cannot help in these cases.

By a process of meditation on certain lines it is possible for anyone to reach a state when his mind is so purified that its range of mental vision is no more obstructed. In that event one can develop the memory of past lives. This is called "pubbenivāsānussati ñāṇa." This of course postulates such a high degree of purity that not until one attains the state of the fourth "jhāna" is this knowledge available. Thus have the Buddhas and arahats been able to view the past lives not only of their own but also of others as well.

The next chapter contains an account of four cases of spontaneous recall of previous lives, the details of which have been checked up and found to be correct.

XIV. Some Investigated Cases of Rebirth

The case of Pramod

Pramod, the second son of Professor Bankey Lal Sharma of Bissauli in Uttar Pradesh, India, was born on October 11th, 1944. When he was about two-and-a-half years old he told his mother not to cook because he had a wife in Moradabad who could cook. Moradabad is a town about ninety miles away from Bissauli. The boy took an extraordinary interest in biscuits. Whenever he saw anyone purchasing biscuits he would tell him that he owned a large biscuit factory in Moradabad. Whenever he was taken to a big shop he would say that his shop at Moradabad was much bigger. He also said that he had a large soda-water factory there. Later he said that his name was Paramanand and had a brother called Mohanlal and that the two together owned this biscuit factory and soda factory which were run under the name of Mohan Brothers. He also said that he died of a stomach ailment resulting from eating too much curd.

Pramod's parents took no notice of these references to a previous life. Pramod however continued to repeat these references, and often insisted that he should be taken to Moradabad. Those references reached the ears of a family in Moradabad who owned a soda and biscuit factory under the name of Mohan Brothers. One of the brothers, Paramanand had died on 9th May 1943. He had suffered from a chronic gastro-intestinal ailment as a result of excessive eating of curd. He died of appendicitis and peritonitis. As the story the family had heard tallied with the events and circumstances of the life of the deceased Paramanand, the other brother, Mohan Lal, with some of his relatives came to Bissauli to see this Pramod who claimed to be the dead Paramanand. They missed him as he had left for a distant village to meet a relative, but the boy's father Professor Sharma promised to bring the boy to Moradabad. Shortly thereafter the father kept his word by bringing the boy to Moradabad. The boy was then about five years old. Father and son travelled by train and on alighting from the train at Moradabad railway station Pramod at once recognized Mohan Lal as his former brother and running up to him embraced him fondly. From the railway station they were driven in a tonga to Mohan Lal's house.

On the way Pramod recognized a building which he said was the town hall, and then remarked that their shop should not be very far off. It is significant that Pramod used the English expression "town hall" although that expression is not at all known in his native Bissauli. The tonga on purpose was being driven past the correct shop, without stopping there, in order to watch Pramod's reactions. Pramod at once called out for the tonga to halt, remarking that this was the shop. When the vehicle stopped, this boy led the way to the house where the claimed to have lived. He then entered the room set apart for religious devotions and stood there for a moment in reverential worship.

Inside the house he recognized his former mother. He recognized his former wife and enquired why she was not wearing the "bindu" mark on her forehead. He recognized his former daughter and two sons of his and some relatives but he could not recognize his eldest son who had greatly changed in appearance after the father's death.

On entering the soda factory he found that the machine there would not work. The water connection had been deliberately stopped in order to see what Pramod would do. He detected at once that the machine would not operate because the water connection was not working and immediately set it right explaining to the workmen there how this could be done. He was only five years old when he thus instructed the workmen.

Pramod spent two happy days at Moradabad where he was able to reveal his familiarity with many places, many buildings and many persons including even a Muslim debtor to whom he remarked, "I have to get some money back from you." The boy was so fond of Moradabad that it was very difficult to induce him to return to his home in Bissauli. Eventually he was carried away in his sleep by his father. Subsequently, one day wishing again to revisit Moradabad he ran away from home unnoticed and went as far as the railway station in Bissauli when he was brought back much to his discomfiture.

This case was first investigated within a few weeks of Pramod's first visit to Moradabad by Professor B. L. Attreya of Benares University. A few years later the case was further investigated by Professor Ian Stevenson of Virginia University, who later made another visit to recheck the case. His account of this case with his analysis of the recorded evidence and his comments appears in his book, Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation.

The case of Shanti Devi

Shanti Devi was born in 1926 in Delhi. From about her third year she began to refer to her former life in Muttra, a town sixty miles away from Delhi. She said that her former name was Lugdi and that she was married to a cloth merchant called Kadar Nath Chaubey. She also stated that ten days after giving birth to a male child she died. As Shanti Devi was repeatedly making these references to her former life, her parents wrote to Kadar Nath Chaubey who to their surprise answered the letter. In his reply be confirmed the correctness of Shanti Devi's references which were conveyed to him. Later they sent a relative of his to visit the girl and followed this up with his own visit which was unannounced. The girl identified him. Shortly thereafter, enquiries were made and it was established that the girl had never been out of her native Delhi. A committee was then appointed to witness her visit to Muttra and to watch her reaction.

On alighting at the railway station of Muttra, out of a large crowd of persons she recognized another relative of Chaubey. When she entered the horse-carriage that was made ready for her, she was asked to give instructions to the driver. She then directed the way right up to the house of Chaubey which, having been repainted, bore a different appearance in spite of which, she was able to recognize it. She was also able to identify Chaubey's old father.

A number of questions were put to her before she entered the house regarding the accommodation there and the arrangement of furniture there, all of which she correctly answered. She also identified about fifty persons out of a crowd that had gathered there. On going to the house of Chaubey's parents she pointed to a corner in a particular room where she said she had buried some money. The place was dug up but no money was found. Thereupon Chaubey confessed that after her death he had removed the money.

This case was investigated in 1936 by the International Aryan League, Delhi, and is referred to by Professor Ian Stevenson in his book The Evidence for Survival from Claimed Memories of Former Incarnations.

The case of Gnanatillake

Gnanatillake was born on 14th February 1956 in an insignificant village sixteen miles away from Talawakelle, Ceylon (Sri Lanka). When she was about two years old she began making references to a previous life. Later when she heard that some persons from her village had returned from a visit to Talawakelle she promptly remarked that Talawakelle was the place where her former parents had lived and began to give details of her former home and even mentioned the names of her family members. The credit of discovering this case goes to Mr. H.

S. Nissanka of Kandy. Equal credit goes to Ven. Piyadassi Mahāthera of Vajirārāma, Colombo, who along with Mr. Nissanka pursued this case with the greatest interest and enthusiasm. They visited the girl's home, and tactfully questioning the shy girl elicited much valuable information regarding details of her former life and home.

It was ascertained that her previous home was near a tea factory in Talawakelle, that she was then a boy and went to school with her sister by train which passed through a long tunnel. (Everything points to the school being Sri-Pada College, Hatton.) She said that one day standing by the road, she and her sister watched the Queen travelling by train (the present Queen Elizabeth visited Ceylon in 1954 and travelling by train passed through Talawakelle.)

Both Venerable Piyadassi and Mr. Nissanka were determined to find the house in Talawakelle where Gnanatillake had claimed she had lived as a boy and died. They went to several places and questioned several persons. They spent several hours at the office of the Registrar of Deaths but without success. With several others also assisting in the search, Gnanatillake was taken to Talawakelle where she identified several buildings in the town but could not locate her former house as it had been demolished since her death. Ultimately they managed to contact the parents of a boy who had attended Sri Pada College, Hatton, and had died on 9th of November, 1954, at the age of twelve. When the parents were questioned and details of the boy's life were ascertained, it become apparent that this information tallied with what Gnanatillake had said about her previous life.

A board of enquiry with Venerable Piyadassi Mahāthera as president was then held at the Talawakelle Rest House, where many witnesses were examined, among them being the members of Tillekeratna's (the dead boy's) family, a teacher who had taught Tillekeratna, and the principal of Sri Pada College, Hatton. At this meeting which was held in the presence of a large public gathering, Gnanatilake was for the first time confronted with Tillekeratna's mother whom she identified with an earnest look, remarking softly "That is my Talawakelle mother."

Professor Ian Stevenson visited Talawakelle in 1961 and conducted an independent investigation of this case. His account along with his analysis of the recorded evidence and his comments appear in his book *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*. Mr. Nissanka has given a full account of this case, in a book written in Sinhalese, entitled *Newatha Upan Deriya* (The Reborn Girl).

The case of H. A. Wijeyratne

H. A. Wijeyratne, the youngest son of H. A. Tillekeratna Hamy, was born on 17th January 1947 at Kaltota, a small village not many miles away from the town of Balangoda. From his birth there appeared a marked hollow on the right side of his chest below the right collar bone and the right arm pit. His right hand is thin and emaciated and the fingers in that hand are half the normal length. From about his third year, whenever he was by himself, he had a habit of walking round his house and muttering to himself. This peculiar behaviour was first noticed by his mother, who overheard him saying that the deformity in his hand was due to his having stabbed his wife in his former life. He used to make these remarks looking at his right hand. The father, Tillekeratna Hamy, tried to dissuade the boy from referring to this incident but without success. Curiously a younger brother of Tillekeratna Hamy called Ratran Hamy, had been sentenced to death and executed in 1928 for the murder of his wife. The further details given by Wijeratne regarding the circumstances of his previous life and regarding the charge of murder brought against him tally with the circumstances of Ratran Hamy's life and the charge of murder Ratran Hamy had to face.

Venerable Ānanda Maitreya Mahāthera of Balangoda was the first person of consequence who heard about Wijeratne's claims to have had a former existence. He questioned the boy and his parents. The boy even described some preliminary details regarding his execution. He is also supposed to have said in his previous life that after his execution he would come back to his brother (i.e., Tillekeratna Hamy). Tillekeratna Hamy did not wish this to be known as he feared the relations of the murdered woman would wreak vengeance on the boy. Later Mr. Francis Story made more detailed enquiries. Professor Ian Stevenson pursued the matter on his arrival in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). He found that the Supreme Court proceedings of the trial of Ratran Hamy corroborate to some extent the story as told by Wijeyratne regarding the cause of his displeasure with his former wife. The medical evidence in the Supreme Court case shows that the murdered woman had, among other injuries, a gaping incised wound 2 ½" long, 1 ½" broad, just below the left armpit involving the lung. Curiously, Wijeyratne has a prominent hollow in his chest, but it is on his right side under the right armpit. Could this however, be a standing reminder to him of the injury he inflicted on the wife of his previous existence or is it just chance? The murder was perpetrated with his right hand. Could the present condition of his right hand and arm be an instance of retributive kamma, or is it also just chance? Nevertheless the account the boy gave of his past life to Venerable Ānanda Maitreya Mahāthera tallies with what the boy's father had told the Mahāthera and what the local residents are aware of. It may also be mentioned that the present writer himself has made an independent investigation of this case.

An account of this case with his analysis of the recorded evidence and with his comments appears in Professor Ian Stevenson's book *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*.

XV. Some Questions and Answers

Now that we have studied the subject of rebirth from many aspects, let us deal with certain questions that usually arise in an attempt to understand rebirth, and which have been asked of the writer at the conclusion of many lectures given by him on this subject:

Question 1

Can you deny the possibility that some of these supposed cases of spontaneous recall of past lives are deliberate fabrications where collected information is put into the mouths of unsuspecting children who are made to repeat such information on being questioned by anyone.

Answer

As a bare theoretical possibility the answer is, "I cannot deny such a possibility." But as a practical proposition, to coach successfully a child with a prepared story of a past life is scarcely possible. In the first instance, the child, for the very reason that it is an unsuspecting child, is easily liable to trip under the skilful cross-examination of trained scientific investigators. Further, in order to give the false rebirth story the appearance of truth, the perpetrator of this fraud must first acquaint himself with numerous details of the life of a person who has actually died elsewhere. This search will have to cover a wide area of events and circumstances connected with the activities of the dead person. If the place of death of this person is in a far off country the task of collecting these numerous details becomes difficult in the extreme, if not almost impossible. Thereafter this vast fund of information has to be imparted into the child-mind without confusing it and, what is more difficult, to see to it that these details are retained in the child-mind in their proper sequence. If it is the parents of the child who would perpetrate this fraud, many others will have to join in it such as the servants and the neighbours, the relations and associates of the child who are most likely to be aware or to be made aware of the child's references to its past life. The range of cross-examination being wide and varied, the person who fabricates a false story cannot possibly know beforehand all the questions that will be asked, and unless all the witnesses are consistent and do not contradict one another, the whole story falls to the ground. The maker of the false story has not only to stage this difficult drama without tell-tale flaws, but has also to keep it alive, as trained investigators are never satisfied with just one single investigation. Indeed this would be in the nature of a gigantic conspiracy involving the co-operation of several others and the expenditure of much time, money and energy—and to what purpose? Some might say that the parents would relish some publicity for their child, but it must be remembered that the doubtful advantage of such publicity hardly compensates for the stupendous effort involved in staging a false drama which may any moment break down under the keen vigilance of investigators who may any moment re-visit and re-examine the child as well as all the witnesses.

Question 2

Can rebirth ever take place without anything travelling or passing over from one life to the next?

Answer

This question assumes that there is already in us something which is capable of travelling or passing over from us at the moment of death. There is the further assumption that this

something is stable and unchanging, for it has to persist through life if it is to continue on to the next life. The rigid analysis of body and mind as appearing in the Buddhist texts and briefly indicated in an earlier chapter, shows that every moment every part of the body and mind is undergoing a change, leaving no room whatsoever for anything to remain stable and static in view of the relentless law of change. As stated in the second chapter, at no point of time is anything not in the process of becoming something else, in view of the law of becoming. Something unchanging and stable within the human system is therefore unthinkable.

A question such as the one under consideration arises from the failure to appreciate the silent and imperceptible working of the law of cause and effect. Effect need not be physically associated with the cause. Effect is merely the result of the cause. When the photograph of a man is taken, has anything travelled from the man to the photograph? When a man stands before a mirror and his image appears in the mirror, has anything travelled from the man to the mirror? It is just a case of effect succeeding cause. Sir William Crooks in his *Edinburgh Lectures on Mental Science*, has said, "It has also been proved by experiments that by an act of the will the mind can cause objects such as metal levers to move." Such is the nature of thought-power. Further, when the causative factor is something mental or psychic, distance is no bar to the operation of the law of cause and effect. In the psychic plane time and distance do not count.

Even consciousness does not travel. The Buddha is reported to have strongly reprimanded a monk called Sāti for saying that the Buddha had declared that consciousness travels from one life to the next (Mahā Taṇhā Saṅkhaya Sutta, Majjhima Nikayā). It is therefore abundantly clear that nothing need pass from one life to the next to cause that next life to arise. One often does say loosely that a man after death has gone to the deva-world or to hell. This is said conventionally for mere convenience of expression, just as one would say that the sun rises from the east whereas in reality the sun never rises from the east, nor does a dead man go anywhere. It is only a metaphorical way of expression. Present life is the effect of which past life is the cause. The thoughts, words and deeds of the past life create powerful energies which can condition the arising of the present life.

As stated by Venerable Ñāṇatiloka in *Karma and Rebirth* (The Wheel No. 9), "Thus nothing transmigrates from one life to the next. And what we call our ego is in reality only this process of continual change, of continual arising and passing away, moment after moment, day after day, year after year, life after life. Just as a wave that apparently hastens over the surface of the ocean is in reality nothing but a continuous rising and falling of ever new masses of water, each time called forth through the transmission of energy, even so, closely considered, is there in the ultimate sense no permanent ego entity that passes through the ocean of saṃsāra, but merely a process of physical and mental phenomena taking place ever and anon, being whipped up by the impulse and will for life." Energy does not travel from place to place, but can cease to manifest in one place and commence to manifest itself in another place.

Question 3

If nothing passes from one life to the next, is the individual reborn identical with the individual who had died? Is he the same as the one who died or is he someone else?

Answer

There is no identity of personality between the two individuals, in the sense that neither the body (*rūpa*) nor the mind (*nāma*) of the dying individual is present in the individual reborn. There is however this important fact not to be overlooked which makes it difficult entirely to disconnect the dying individual from the individual reborn. We have learnt that the mind (*nāma*) is not a permanent unchanging entity. It is not something fixed or static. It is dynamic. It

is a process, a series (*santati*) or flow of mental states each following the other with such rapidity that it appears or seems to be something permanent whereas in reality it is not. We have studied how this process of changing from one mental state to another does not end with death. As a result of the cessation of the terminal mental state at the moment of death another mental state arises (*paṭisandhi viññāṇa*) though in a different plane or place. This is possible because thoughts are forces or energies, and cannot perish with the body, on account of the principle of conservation of energy. Thus the process of change continues. Thus there is a continuity of the mental part (nāma) of the dying individual. The terminal mental state of the dying individual and the initial mental state of the individual reborn, belong to the same current of cause and effect. Hence it would not be accurate to say that there is no identity whatsoever between the two individuals. At the same time, merely to state that there is identity, can lead to a number of misconceptions.

The best answer to this question as to whether the two individuals are the same is the answer given by Nāgasena Thera to King Milinda in respect of this same question: *"na ca so, na ca añño"*- "Not the same, yet not another." There are some who remark that this answer is no answer but an elusive quibbling with words. Such a remark is inconsiderate and undeserved. It is not every question that can be satisfactorily answered with a categorical "yes" or "no." As Nāgasena Thera on that occasion asked, "Is the flame of the lighted candle in the second watch of the night identical with the flame in the third watch of the night"? Neither "yes" nor "no" will explain the situation. When a child becomes in the course of time an old man, would you say that the old man is identical with the child? Can you explain the situation by a mere "yes" or "no"? Here too, is it not more satisfactory to say, "*na ca so, na ca añño*"—"Not the same, yet not another"? There is, however, sufficient identity between the child and the old man to fix moral responsibility on the old man for the acts of the child. Similarly there is sufficient identity between the dying individual and the individual reborn to establish the latter's responsibility for the acts of the former. As stated in the *Visuddhi Magga* (Ch. 17), "With a stream of continuity there is neither identity nor otherness. For if there were absolute identity in a stream of continuity, there would be no forming of curd from milk. And yet if there were absolute otherness the curd would not be derived from the milk. And so too with all causally arisen things. So neither absolute identity nor absolute otherness should be assumed here." (Venerable Ñāṇamoli Thera's translation).

Question 4

If every death is followed by a birth, the world's population should be constant, but how is it that, as everyone knows, the world's population is fast increasing year by year?

Answer

It is perfectly true that the world's population is fast increasing. It is also perfectly true that every death is followed by a birth. There is however nothing inconsistent between these two statements, when we consider the following:

1. Rebirth can take place not only in this world (whose population only we can count) but in countless other world systems of which the Buddhist texts speak.
2. Rebirth does not necessarily mean that the preceding death was in a human plane. An animal or a celestial being dying can be reborn as a human being.
3. Similarly a death does not necessarily mean that the succeeding rebirth is in a human plane. A man dying can be reborn as an animal or a god.

Question 5

If it is the nature of the last conscious thought of the dying man that determines the place and conditions of his next life, it can so happen that a man who is generally good may happen to entertain a very bad thought at the dying moment, as a result of which he is reborn under very bad circumstances. Has all the earlier good he has done passed for nought?

Answer

Although the nature of the last thought, generally speaking, determines the nature of the next birth, it does not mean that all the earlier thoughts and deeds do not exert their influence on the individual reborn. The last thought before death, being the very last, must necessarily exert the first influence on the being-to-be. This does not prevent the earlier thoughts and deeds from exerting their influence later on the new life. The illustration is usually given of an enclosure full of cattle. An old and weary bull happens to be just by the gate of the enclosure which is locked, while younger and stronger bulls are found at the rear of the enclosure. As soon as the gate is opened, the old bull will come out first and will walk away ahead of the younger ones but in the long run the younger bulls will overtake the old bull. Similarly the good or bad thoughts that occupy the mind when one is at death's door (*āsanna kamma*) will have immediate effect but the earlier thoughts and deeds will in due course produce their effects. At the same time it must be remembered, as indicated earlier, that the effects of garuka kamma (weighty kamma) take precedence over *āsanna kamma* (death-proximate kamma or terminal kamma).

Question 6

Is there such a close and immediate connection between death and rebirth that there is no time-lapse between the two? If that be so, then the position would be that death is birth and birth is death. Is that correct?

Answer

Certain schools of thought believe that there is an intermediate state (*antarābhava*), but according to Theravāda Buddhism there is no such state at all because death and birth are part of one process. Immediately after the cessation of cuti citta (death-consciousness) the *paṭisandhi viññāṇa* (re-linking consciousness) arises. The cessation of the maraṇasaññā javana citta and the cuti citta is necessarily followed by the arising of the paṭisandhi viññāṇa. A death here means a birth elsewhere. What disappears here appears elsewhere. A gate is both an exit gate and an entrance gate according to the standpoint of the observer. If he sees anyone coming out of it he regards it as an exit gate. But if some other observer sees the same man entering through that gate, to that observer it is an entrance gate, yet in both cases it was the same gate that was made use of. According to Buddhism birth and death are merely communicating doors from one life to another, the continuous process of consciousness being the medium uniting the different lives of man. As Dahlke says, "Dying is nothing but a backward view of birth, and birth is nothing but a forward view of death. In truth, both are the same, a phase of unbroken grasping." Dahlke takes up the case of the caterpillar changing into a butterfly and says, "In the face of the miracles of birth and death, science strongly resembles a boy making his first observations in natural history. Finding in his glass case the caterpillar dead and the butterfly born, he will say, 'Two miracles! The old has died and something new has made its appearance.' Instead of both facts merging into one another in a true conception of what has taken place, to his mistaken notion they fall apart from one another and become problems defying solution. Even so is it with science. Through the failure to recognize that the facts of death here and birth there are forms of one and the same experience, instead of a single comprehension of both under the one aspect,

two miracles are found by her to be the present. On this point the physicist has already left the stage of childhood behind. Today he no longer says, 'Two miracles! Heat is gone and motion is present.' He has found the clue, albeit it is true only in the form of reaction. The biologist however still remains incapable of replacing two miracles with a true and genuine conception. He is still unaware that it is with dying that being born must be purchased. Hence he treats birth as a fact by itself and death as a fact by itself, and so remains confronting both problems internally insoluble." *Buddhism and Science*.

Question 7

Why are we unable to recall our past lives if indeed we had past lives? If we had past lives, we surely ought to be able to recall them?

Answer

The general rule seems to be that death being an obliterating agent, a person reborn is mentally incapable of recalling his past life. This is nature's protection, for it certainly is confusing if past memories keep crowding into a present mind of a person reborn when he has to keep abreast of present life conditions. There is a case of a younger brother who had died and was reborn as his elder brother's son and who persisted in addressing his present father as brother, much to the father's embarrassment and despite severe scolding and warnings from relations not to address a father as a brother. Even his mental attitude towards his father may not be the same as that of a normal son towards his father.

But why is our inability to recall our past lives taken to mean that we never had past lives? To those who argue thus, one would like to pose the questions, "Which of us can remember the facts of our earliest infancy, let alone a previous life? Which of us can remember being born? Does this mean that there was no early infancy for us, or that we were not born at all?" The fact is that at the time of birth and also in early infancy our minds for the most part were existing in the bhavaṅga or unconscious state and not in the fully conscious state. Even during the day, a newborn infant is for the most part sleeping. Human memory is not a perfect faculty. Even adults may forget an incident within a few days of its occurrence, but this does not mean that that incident did not occur. All incidents and events, if they once made their impressions on the conscious vīthi citta, are never lost even if the impressions have faded from the conscious vīthi citta because they have sunk into the unconscious bhavaṅga, from where, under certain circumstances, with the proper technique, they can be recalled. These are the cases discussed in Chapter XII. Then there are cases of spontaneous recall of past lives without the intervention of hypnosis. These are discussed in Chapter XIII. When a recall is possible and when not, is not yet known.

Question 8

The doctrine of rebirth postulates not one previous birth but innumerable previous births. That being so, where is the start of this series of successive births? Why is the doctrine of dependent origination represented as a round of births and deaths and not as a straight line of successive births and deaths, in which case we would be able to see the starting point of this line of births and deaths? In other words is there no First Cause?

Answer

When the Buddha promulgated his Dhamma, it was not his purpose to explain the origin of life or the beginning to the world. His one purpose was to explain to suffering mankind the universal malady of dukkha (disharmony) and to prescribe a remedy thereto. This he felt was

the most pressing need for all time. He sought to show a way of escape from the bondage of suffering. Anything outside this was irrelevant for his purpose, as can be judged from this statement of his:

"Dukkhañ c'eva paññāpemi, dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ."

"One thing only do I teach sorrow and its end to reach."

(Majjhima Nikāya Part I, Sutta 22)

In conformity with this limited purpose he chose not to indulge in metaphysical theories and abstractions about the origin of life and the beginning of the world—matters which have no bearing on the aim and object of life as shown by him. According to him, the one purpose of life is to develop ourselves morally (*sīla*), develop the mental powers of concentration (*samādhi*), and by such aid obtain that higher vision (*paññā*) whereby one will be able to see things as they actually are (*yathābhūtañāṇa*—reality), and so be released from this life of suffering. Therefore, of all the facts that comprise life's entirety, he brought out only such as are necessary for the realization of this goal.

Why the Doctrine of Rebirth Has No Reference to a First Cause

When the Buddha spoke on rebirth it was only for the purpose of showing that the consequences of our deeds in this life will follow us to a life hereafter, and that we should therefore be careful and selective in regard to what we think or say or do. In the same way when he spoke of previous births, he was only seeking to explain that our condition in this life, our joys and our sorrows, our opportunities and our impediments are often the results of our deeds in our previous lives. His was essentially a practical purpose and therefore he was not in the least interested to pursue further the process of rebirth and enter into philosophical abstractions.

Why the Doctrine of Dependent Origination has no Reference to a First Cause

As with the doctrine of rebirth, so is it with the doctrine of dependent origination (paṭicca-samuppāda). This doctrine, profound in its significance and difficult of comprehension, sets out a series of 12 conditions or states of factors existing in various modes of dependence on one another and forming, as it were, a round or cycle of conditioning (paccaya) and conditioned (paccuppanna) factors and showing a great and important process that is in existence. These 12 factors are ceaselessly in operation and since this is a process of dependent origination, every condition arises as a result of some other condition and proceeds on into yet another condition. The factors that constitute the process are related to one another not so much through the medium of cause as through the medium of conditionality or dependence. Conditionality, then, is the pattern of this process. (Paṭicca means conditional on or dependent on; samuppāda means arising together). This is hardly the place to expound the profound doctrine of dependent origination, but for the purpose of giving a full answer to the question propounded, it is relevant to state that by this doctrine the Buddha sought to point out the twofold manner in which this process works—the forward manner which leads to repeated births and suffering, and the reverse manner, which leads to the cessation of repeated births and suffering, and which finally leads to the cessation of existence with all its suffering and sorrow. He was keen on pointing out to us that it is left to us to choose the direction in which the process should work in us.

The principle underlying this doctrine can be expressed thus in very simple and general terms without reference to the particular 12 factors: "Imasmiṃ sati, idaṃ hoti—when this exists that exists. Imassa uppādā idaṃ uppajjati—when this arises that arises." In the reverse order this principle works thus: "Imasmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti—when this is not that is not. Imassa

nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati—when this ceases that ceases." (Cūla Sakuludāyi Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya 79.) We thus have a principle of conditionality, relativity and interdependence. This principle is of universal applicability but the Buddha was concerned with applying this principle to explain the process of life and also to show how the process can be made to cease. The twelve factors which arise, each dependent on the preceding factor are:

1. *Avijjā*—Ignorance
2. *Saṅkhārā*—Volitional activities
3. *Viññāṇa or Paṭisandhiviññāṇa*—Rebirth consciousness or re-linking consciousness
4. *Nāma-rūpa*—Mind-body combination
5. *Saḷāyatana*—Six spheres or avenues of sense
6. *Phassa*—Contact
7. *Vedanā*—Feeling
8. *Taṇhā*—Craving
9. *Upādāṇa*—Grasping or clinging
10. *Bhava* or *Kamma-bhava*—The process of becoming or activities
11. *Jāti*—Birth
12. *Jarā-maraṇa*—Decay and death.

These are the factors that are ceaselessly in operation in the long course of man's existence in saṃsāra, showing the endless rounds of births and deaths. This is the process that goes on and on. The first two factors refer to the causative conditions in the past life (*atīta hetu*). The next five factors refer to effects in the present life (*vattamāna phala*). The next two refer to the causative conditions in the present life (*vattamāna hetu*) and the last two refer to effects in the future life (*anāgata phala*).

Since ignorance (*avijjā*) is the root cause of all sorrows, sufferings and disharmonies prevailing in the life process and is a continuing cause, the Buddha in outlining the process made a start with ignorance (*avijjā*), but it must not be taken to mean that ignorance (avijjā) is the primary origin of life or of the world. Buddha considered avijjā (ignorance) to be a sufficient starting point to understand the process of life and to find a way out of it. Since avijjā itself is conditioned by saṅkhāra and since saṅkhāra is in turn conditioned by avijjā, since birth follows death and death follows birth, the process can best be represented by a circle and not by a straight line. The twelve factors of the process are like twelve spokes in a wheel. You can start considering the process from any one spoke in a wheel, regarding each spoke as a factor but you will come back to that spoke again. The process works in cyclic order. It is like a revolving wheel.

When a monk called Māluṅkyaputta had criticised the Buddha for his failure to elucidate these metaphysical problems as to whether the world is eternal or not eternal, or whether the world is finite or infinite, and had declared that he would not lead the holy life until these matters were clarified, the Buddha calmly questioned this monk and obtained his reply that his adoption of the holy life was not conditional on the Buddha's clarification of these problems. The Buddha then admonished this foolish monk in the following manner:

> "It is as if, Māluṅkyaputta, a person were pierced by an arrow thickly smeared with poison and his friends and relatives were to procure a surgeon and then this person were to say, 'I will not have this arrow taken out until I have the details of the person by whom I was

wounded, the nature of the arrow with which I was pierced, etc.', that person would die, Māluṅkyaputta, before this would ever be known to him." Then the Buddha went on to explain why these metaphysical problems were not dealt with by him. "Māluṅkyaputta, I have not revealed whether the world is eternal or not eternal, whether the world is finite or infinite, because these are not profitable, do not concern the bases of holiness, are not conducive to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to tranquility, to intuitive wisdom, to enlightenment or to nibbāna. Therefore, I have not revealed them" (Cūla Māluṅkyaputta Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya 63).

In the Anamatagga Sutta of the Saṃyutta Nikāya, the Buddha has maintained that the primary origin of life is something inconceivable. *"Anamataggo'yaṃ Bhikkhave saṃsāro, pubbakoṭi na paññāyati avijjānīvaraṇānaṃ sattanaṃ taṇhānaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ."* "Inconceivable, brethren, is the origin of this faring on. The earliest point of this faring on of beings cloaked in ignorance and bound by craving is not to be perceived."

According to the Buddhist view referred to earlier, nothing arises from a single cause. This is because all things, all states, are both conditioning and also conditioned and are therefore interdependent. No single event in this universe can remain isolated and unconnected with some other events in some respect or other. Therefore a cause by itself cannot stand. It must arise from other causes and conditions and not from one isolated and unconnected cause, there being always a complexity of interrelated and interdependent causes and conditions. Hence a First Cause originating by itself is unthinkable. It can be a concept. It can be accepted on blind faith, but it can never be recognized through the channels of reason and experience.

Views of Great Thinkers bbout a First Cause

The well-known philosopher Joad in *The Meaning of Life* says, "The universe, we say, is not and cannot be interpreted in terms of one fundamental principle and one only. Two principles at least are required to account for the phenomena of plurality and diversity."

Another well-known thinker, Aldous Huxley, in *Ends and Means*, says, "To refer phenomena back to a First Cause has ceased to be fashionable at least in the West. We shall never succeed in changing our age of iron into an age of gold until we give up our ambition to find a single cause for all our ills and instead admit the existence of many causes acting simultaneously, or intricate correlations and re-duplicated actions and reactions."

Yet another well-known thinker, Bertrand Russell, in *Why I am not a Christian* says, "There is no reason to suppose that the world had a beginning at all. The idea that things must have a beginning is due to the poverty of our imagination."

From the earliest dawn of civilization thinking man has struggled ceaselessly to discover a first beginning of all things but without success. Whatever First Cause is assumed, there will arise immediately the very pertinent question, "What is the cause of that cause?"

Question 9

Is the belief in life after death confined to Buddhists only? Did such a belief exist prior to the advent of Buddhism?

Answer

The belief in a life after death is by no means confined to Buddhists only. This belief is one of great antiquity and existed among the Egyptians and later among the Greeks, the Romans and the Brahmins, long prior to the advent of Buddhism. There is however an important difference between the beliefs of non-Buddhists and the belief of Buddhists on this matter. The non-

Buddhist belief is based an the assumed existence of a soul within man which is said to be able to travel or transmigrate from one life to another, and the word used in this connection is not rebirth but reincarnation. The Buddhist belief is that nothing travels from one life to another, nor is there any such unchanging, stable, static thing as a soul. Hence the Pali word to denote rebirth is "*punabbhava*" which literally means "an existence again." It is not difficult to comprehend rebirth if the existence of a soul is accepted, whereas the Buddhist theory of rebirth is difficult of comprehension since Buddhism admits of no soul and strongly denies that anything travels from one life to another. People of various religious systems and creeds have shared the belief in a life after death. The ancient Egyptians believed in it and it is said that the reason why they embalmed a dead body and placed on it some of the food and clothing the dead man was fond of during his lifetime, was to prevent his "*ka*" or soul from taking another body. The reason no doubt is absurd but this custom indicates the prevalence of a belief in a life after death. In the 6th century B.C. this belief found expression in the writings of the Greek Pherecydes, Empedocles and Pythagoras. Later Plato expressed the same view in his *De Republica*. The Roman poet Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* has given an account of reincarnation. Julius Caesar in his *De Bello Gallico*, Book VI, while giving an account of the customs and manners of Gallia (ancient France), which he had conquered, refers to the prevalence of this belief.

The religion in India before the advent of Buddhism was Brahmanism which in its later Upanishadic stage also taught the reincarnation of beings.

In early Christianity the idea of reincarnation appears to have existed, although Jesus Christ never directly taught it nor repudiated it. In the Old Testament, here and there, are passages where the idea of reincarnation is dimly referred to (e.g., Psalm 126), while in the New Testament (St. Mark 9 and St. Matthew 17) there is a reference to John the Baptist being a reincarnation of Elijah. That the belief in reincarnation was prevalent during the time of Jesus Christ is seen from a question put to Jesus Christ and referred to in St. John 9, it is also seen from the answers given by his disciples to certain questions put to them by Jesus Christ (St. Matthew 16 and St Luke 9).

St. Augustine in his *Confessions* has strongly upheld this doctrine. So did his pupil Origen in *De Principiis* and *Contra Celsus*. Origen used to preach this doctrine wherever he went. While the early Christian church accepted this doctrine, the later church fathers so strongly disapproved of it that at a meeting of the Council of Constantinople specially convened in A.D. 533, the doctrine was formally rejected as no more being a part of the Christian religion. (Vide *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1909 edition, pages 236 and 237.)

As a result of this decision, Christian belief in reincarnation died down, but from about the 19th century the belief steadily gained ground. W. E. Atkinson and several others began to write about reincarnation. Poets of the eminence of Wordsworth, Tennyson, Longfellow and Masefield have expressed this belief, and in the present century an English clergyman of note, Reverend Leslie Weatherhead, delivered a lecture which was published in book form entitled *The Case for Reincarnation*.

Question 10

Beyond an intellectual satisfaction that certain truths hitherto accepted on faith have been established beyond doubt, of what benefit are the researches of rebirth-investigators to those who are not so interested.

Answer

That is a narrow view of the matter. The truth of rebirth is of great consequence to all. There is hardly a man in whom there is no yearning to know whence he came and whither he is bound. The yearning is no doubt more marked in those who are educated, but even in the untutored mind at least occasionally and dimly this yearning makes its presence felt, especially on occasions like the sudden death of a near and dear relative. This is not an intellectual quest. It is a natural urge. It is a natural prompting of the heart to look for something that can explain the mystery of life and death. When it is satisfactorily understood that life did not for the first time commence here in this existence, that this present life with its sorrows and joys, its anxieties and hopes, its losses and gains is the logical outcome of a previous life in accordance with the great principle of action and reaction, then life is no more an enigma or a puzzle. Life is then seen to have a meaning and a purpose. Life then assumes a serious importance not hitherto recognized. Life no more appears to be a dreary round of events and circumstances. New hopes are felt. New visions are opened up. There will be a complete reorientation of a man's views on life as he begins to awaken to the realization that it is he who steers the ship of his destiny, and that it is he who is the builder of his future life. When he keenly realizes that every thought, word and deed of his contributes to the building up of his future life, he will learn to be more and more selective regarding the thoughts he thinks, the words he utters and the actions he performs. If he has led a good life, death will have no fears for him. He can cheerfully and confidently look forward to a happy experience in the life hereafter. If he had led a bad life, he will still have the consolation that kamma is not a finished product but is something always in the making, and that the effects of bad actions can be modified and altered by present good actions. Indeed, he will be happy in the thought that he still has a chance to reconstruct his life, and that any such attempt commenced in good earnest but left undone owing to the intervention of death will have a chance of being taken up again in the life hereafter.

An understanding of rebirth will not only induce a refining influence on one's own life, it will also refine his attitude towards all sentient beings without a single exception, since he will realize that all are his fellow-passengers in the great journey of life, subject to the same universal laws and fundamental principles to which he himself is subject. He will always be ready and willing to give a helping hand to one who needs his help. He will always forgive his enemies. He may hate the sin but he will forgive the sinner. He will habitually wish all beings well.

Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā

May All Beings Be Happy

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